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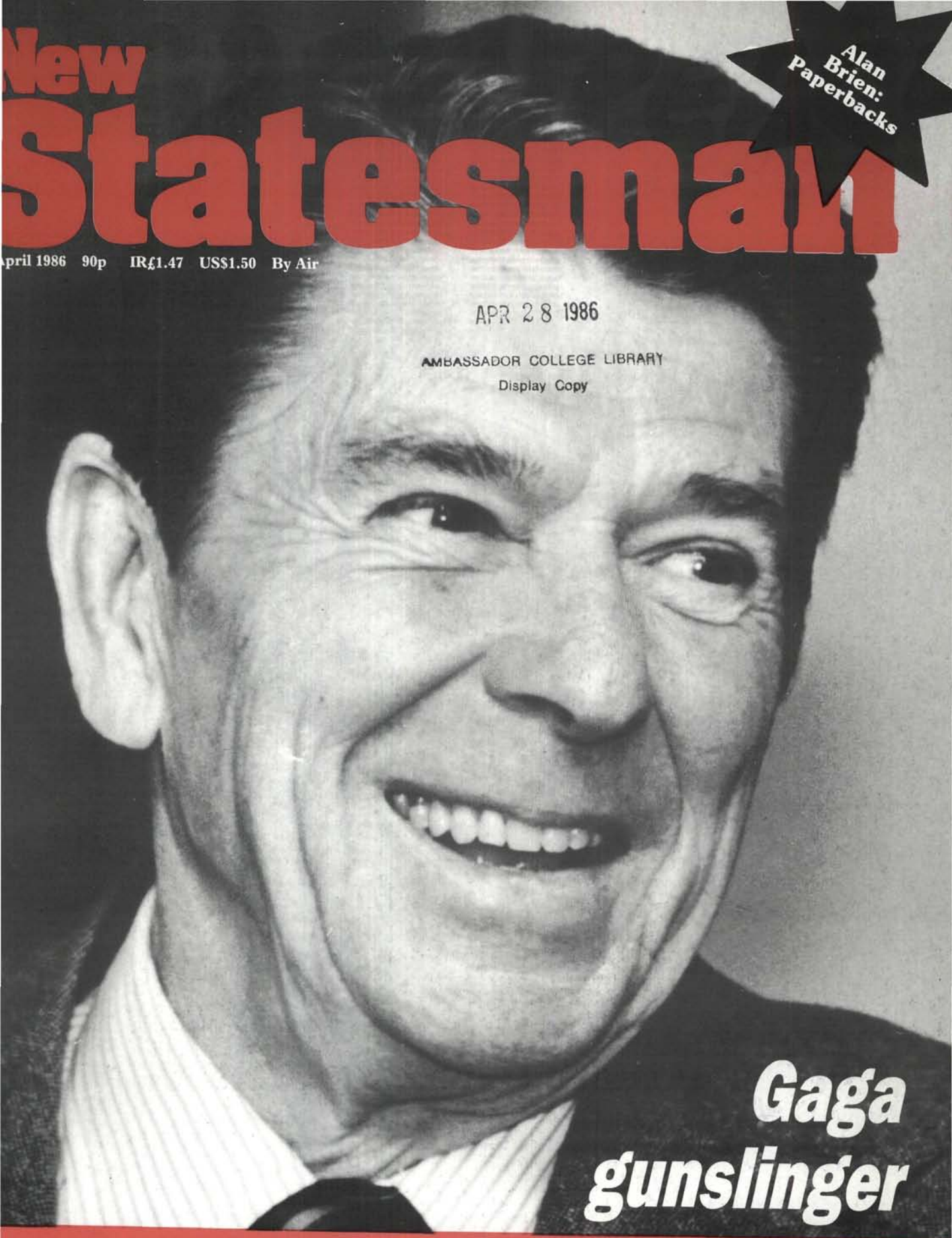

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New Statesman

Cover photo: Camera Press

Assassination mission
With Mrs Thatcher's agreement the US this week launched its largest single air raid since World War II. CLAUDIA WRIGHT examines Reagan's uncheckable hunger to kill Gadafy 18

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NEXT WEEK

FROM BRASS TO MUCK
Like old friends, some companies in the Black Country are known to be ill; their demise comes as no surprise. Others just drop dead without warning. SIMON HEAD looks at the decline of the once boisterously prosperous West Midlands

MALE
New short story by KATHY ACKER (above)

CARAVAGGIO
Fresh from Winston Churchill's hit list, Derek Jarman returns to the screen with his life of the 16th-century painter: JOHN COLEMAN goes to watch

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS
GEOFF DYER considers the problems inherent in Peter Fuller's use, in *Marches Past*, of his own earlier journals

PRIVATE EYES
JOAN SMITH evaluates some recent examples of crime fiction

New Statesman
Vol 111 No 2873 18 April 1986

We have been made into accomplices

IT IS IRONIC in the week when the British government co-operated with the US government in its flagrant breach of international law to recall that the basis of modern legal opinion in this area is the correspondence between the American and British governments after British troops crossed the American border from Canada in 1837 to seize the steamer *Caroline*, which had been helping Canadian rebels. From this incident came the doctrine that actions taken in self-defence or by way of reprisal must not be 'unreasonable or excessive' and must be 'limited by that necessity and kept clearly within it'.

In this century that same right of self-defence has been embodied in Article 51 of the UN Charter. If this week's act of state terrorism by the United States were tried before any competent world tribunal, there can be little doubt that it would be found totally excessive and illegal. That a British government should associate itself so willingly with such an act is deeply humiliating. (Mrs Thatcher's personal understanding of Article 51 is explained by the fact that she used it to justify sinking the *General Belgrano*.)

As we go to press, Colonel Gadafy's fate is increasingly unclear. The fact that he has not been seen in public or on television since the American attack suggests that the assassination mission succeeded, or at least the he is severely incapacitated. If so, there will inevitably be a widespread reaction that the biggest single US bombing raid from British bases since World War II (see Claudia Wright, page 18) will have been justified.

Such a reaction is that the ends justify any means. If that is now the explicit doctrine on which Washington conducts its foreign policy, then America's allies need rapidly to adjust to the fact that a neo-imperialist superpower is completely given over to *Realpolitik*.

Several aspects of the Gadafy affair deserve comment. While there can be no justification for terrorist acts which make victims of entirely innocent and uninvolved bystanders, it is quite simply historically wrong to base policy on the view that terrorism is a sudden and new 'scourge of our time'. Terrorism has been a constant political factor throughout recorded history. Even in a narrow modern context, Zionist terrorists killed more British during the mandate than all factions of the PLO together have killed Americans. And American financed terrorists operating against the established government of Nicaragua have already killed more than either.

The obvious support that American public opinion has given to the Reagan Administration's act of lawlessness derives from pent up frustration that a two-bit fanatic in the desert can so successfully cock a snook at the United States. It is an understandable national reaction, but it is not a basis for conducting any wise long-term foreign policy. By acting as it has, the United States has further severely damaged its right to claim the leadership role for the industrialised world.

THE AMERICAN decision to make the strike with UK-based F-111s was a *political* decision to force the involvement of an ally in the act. As a military decision it made no sense. The United States had all the bomb load and radar jamming capacity it required for the mission at sea with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean.

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The argument that F-111s have higher supersonic speed to elude Soviet-supplied surface-to-air missiles is irrelevant, because at the critical moments of coming in from the sea to attack they would have had to be operating subsonically; and one F-111 was indeed lost. Their huge 30,000lb payloads are equally irrelevant as an operating argument, because on such an extended mission most of that capacity would have been taken up with extra fuel tanks. The F-111s contain NATO's most sophisticated and secret avionic systems, designed to hug the mountains and plains of Europe on bombing missions against the Soviet Union. One of these super-secret weapon systems is now presumably in the hands of the Libyans and their Soviet advisers. The gratuitous decision to hit Gadafy the hard way was taken *solely* in order to put the Thatcher government on the spot over its loyalty to Washington — a Washington that still smarts over the way in which Mrs Thatcher dared publicly to criticise the American invasion of Grenada, when she had received so much American help during the Falklands War.

All European governments in the last few years have experienced the reality of what being an 'ally' of the United States means. It is a one way relationship, without any element of genuine partnership or consultation. The Lebanon, Star Wars and now Libya are just recent examples of domineering American unilateralism. In the case of Italy, over the *Achille Lauro*, American indifference to European politics almost brought down the government and turned Prime Minister Craxi into an unlikely nationalist hero for standing up to Washington.

Mrs Thatcher has not got that option. For her to have declined to allow the Americans to use its UK-bases would have meant either the humiliation of having the Americans use them without consent, or the unacceptable possibility of an open row with her sponsor. After this episode, it is essential for the next British government genuinely to throw itself into the task of creating a *European* counterweight to the superpowers. □

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Adieux: farewell to Simone and Jean

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR, who died this week at the age of 78, has elsewhere been mourned as a novelist, a Leftist and a cultural commentator. In what is perhaps her most distinctive role — an instigating 20th-century feminist theorist — she has mostly been praised for her constancy. Certainly, from 1949, with the publication of her consciousness-raising analysis *The Second Sex*, through her signing of the 'illegal abortion' Manifesto of 1971, to the end, with her continued involvement in feminist action and thought, she maintained a commitment to women's right to 'take their destiny into their own hands'.

But more impressive and instructive still was her intellectual limberness. It's easy to forget that in 1949 she'd refused to be identified as 'feminist' and insisted that the problems of the patriarchy 'would resolve themselves automatically in the context of socialist development' — a position totally reconsidered by the time of her 1972 *Nouvel Observateur* interview. In her middle 60s she was still revising her attitudes towards, for example, the political relevance of lesbianism.

As she believed, so she lived. Though mistrusted by many younger women for her public deference to the genius of Sartre, she insisted, throughout their half-century together, on physical, emotional and intellectual independence — while maintaining a constancy of love, involvement and concern.

●

'Saint Genet', Sartre called him, knowing that saintliness ascribed to an habitual criminal, sentenced to life imprisonment in 1948, would shock and tease.

Like all the best jokes, Sartre's was serious. Jean Genet, who also died this week, spent much of his life and work 'undermining' the established order in an effort to cleanse it. Constantly, in the novels and plays produced between 1942 and 1961 which established him as one of Europe's most important post-war writers, he demonstrated the anarchic brutality of Law and Order. He uncovered the blasphemies of organised religion. He demonstrated the obscenities of racism and sexism and made clear the connections between them.

Predictably it was his fate to be called anarchic, blasphemous and obscene. Parisians tore a theatre apart during *The Blacks*. British Customs & Excise seized his books in 1956. Anthony Blond battled to publish him legally in England.

To the end of his life Genet was pre-occupied with power. Who has it, and how? Who suffers under it, and why? His own childhood and early manhood, passed in some of Europe's harshest prisons, enabled him later to recognise unconscious complicities between oppressor and oppressed. His own homosexuality provided the starting point for his brilliantly disturbing analyses of gender. Prison life's incessant masturbatory daydreams taught him the delights and dangers of confusing reality and fantasy. Later in his work he traced those complicities and confusions: between coloniser and colonised, black and white, rich and poor, prisoner and warder, men and women.

Harold Hobson defiantly called Genet one of the last two great European writers to be formed by Christianity. Certainly he never forgot the power of the Word. Power, he recognised and taught, lies with those who successfully impose upon us their definitions of brutality, blasphemy, obscenity, anarchy, Law and Order.

For which lesson, and many others, most grateful thanks. □

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Angeles Cubas

Spanish peace movement rallying in Madrid against the government's 'yes to NATO' referendum

SPAIN'S PEACE PEOPLE FIGHT THAT NATO VOTE

THE SIXTH FLEET's presence off Libya, had it happened only days earlier, might have swung the 12 March Spanish referendum away from NATO. As it is, the Spanish peace movement isn't a whit demoralised and girds itself for carrying the fight into Parliament on the back of new elections. As King Juan Carlos visits Britain, JANE MAYES describes the flourishing Spanish peace politics

THE SPANISH peace movement is going to extend its anti-NATO campaign into a wider political arena and into the forthcoming Spanish general election despite failing to win a 'NO to NATO' vote in the 12 March Referendum. Discussions are taking place with the Euro-Communist Party on the formation of an alternative electoral list for the general election — due in October though there are rumours it might be brought forward to June to preempt the establishment of just such an anti-NATO front.

The main peace movement umbrella grouping, CEOP (Coorindora Estatal De Organizationes Pacifistas), covers 400 local peace collectives and most Left parties. It is drawing together a programme of demands based on the Referendum question to include:

- an Iberian Peninsula nuclear weapons free zone,
- the removal of existing US troops in Spain,
- the dismantling of the infrastructure which at present makes possible storage and transportation of US nuclear weapons via existing US bases (established under the 1953 US/Spanish bi-lateral Treaty of Co-operation signed by Franco),
- and rights of inspection of US bases by a Spanish Parliamentary Commission.

Such a programme would form the basis of any electoral alliance with the Communist Party.

While an electoral alliance would have to be negotiated at the level of the 17 Spanish autonomous regions and would depend on attitudes taken by local Communist parties, at present it appears highly likely that the Communist Party, recognising the ability of the peace movement to mobilise huge numbers of people over the NATO issue, will co-operate in placing peace movement representatives high on the electoral list, giving Spain a good chance of having its peace movement represented directly in Parliament by the end of 1986.

Psephocatastrophe

Pre-Referendum polls predicted victory for the NO vote. The result was 52 per cent YES to NATO, 40 per cent NO. The PSOE (Spanish Socialist Party) got its YES by linking membership of NATO with economic growth, the EEC and 'modernisation' — and threatened economic reprisals and higher unemployment as the consequence of withdrawal from NATO.

Given that 90 per cent of television time went to the government YES campaign, the peace movement is spending little time in recriminations. Meetings are still actively attended with many young voters seen to continue campaigning. Interest is building up around the de-nuclearisation demands.

There have been tensions within CEOP, however, mostly between the non-aligned peace collectives and the radical nationalists and radical Marxists, and these look likely to come to a head at a co-ordinating meeting set for 20 April. The strains are mainly caused by minority attitudes to violence (linked with ETA and Sinn Fein) and, most recently, pro-Libyan demonstrations called by the Madrid based anti-NATO Commission.

Had Reagan only . . .

Although CND sent both Bruce Kent and E P Thompson to the final rallies of the campaign, providing much welcomed support, there is evidence of a northern European myopia, caused perhaps by a combination of embarrassment over CEOP's uncompromising stand against NATO, and a lack of interest in the politics of the Mediterranean.

Ironically, Reagan's present Libyan adventure illustrates exactly both the rationale behind the Spanish anti-NATO position, and the global significance of interventionism and the Mediterranean. Spaniards, being more aware of these things, might well as it turns out have voted differently if the Sixth Fleet had been on full alert on 12 March. ●

Jane Mayer is chair of CND International Committee

CALLS FOR 'MUESLI LEFT' TO 'LAY OFF' CUNNINGHAM

UNLESS URGENT conciliatory action is taken, nuclear power is likely to become the most dangerous and divisive issue to plague the Labour Party in the run-up to the next General Election. If the Shadow Cabinet and the National Executive Committee fail to recognise and constructively combat the problem, there will be, in the words of one prominent left-winger this week 'an explosion of resentment and conflict in the party'.

But equally a growing number of anti-nuclear activists and MPs now believe that there is nothing to be gained by continual public attacks on Labour's enthusiastically pro-nuclear environment spokesperson, Dr John Cunningham MP. He has angrered many with his contemptuous rejection of the motion calling for 'a halt to the nuclear power programme and a phasing out of all existing plants' which was agreed by 3.9 to 2.4 million votes at last October's Labour Party Conference (*NS* 20-27 December 1985 and 27 January and 7 March 1986).

Dr Kim Howells, from the South Wales area of the National Union of Mineworkers, told a Labour movement conference on nuclear power last weekend that criticising Cunningham distracts attention from the genuine concern about jobs that he reflects. Howell believes there's an 'awful smugness' about Labour's position on nuclear power amongst many of those on the 'Muesli Left', and that the issue of alternative employment for nuclear industry workers still hasn't been properly addressed.

Previous demands from the Left-wing Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) and the Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA) that Cunningham should be sacked as environment spokesperson prompted the Labour leader Neil Kinnock to express his 'complete confidence' in him. Further personal attacks would serve only to increase polarisation and, if anything, reinforce, Cunningham's position. That is why — after pressure from anti-nuclear MPs — SERA, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace rewrote and reprinted their joint leaflet on *The end of the nuclear era* without the exhortation to write to Cunningham 'asking for a clear statement on his position on nuclear power'.

Perhaps a more sensible target for private criticism now would be the Shadow energy spokesperson, Stan Orme, who appears to have taken a remarkably low profile on the nuclear power issue. He must take some responsibility for the persistent failure of the Labour Party to set up a joint National Executive/Parliamentary policy committee on energy, something it has done for virtually every other important policy area. Of course a new committee wouldn't instantly solve the problem, but it might help refocus the argument on issues rather than personalities.

Rob Edwards

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Militant wanders up the airy mountain, down the rushy glen

IN THE RUN-UP to the Labour NEC's next moves on Militant at this ultra-sensitive time of forthcoming local elections, IAN WILLIAMS describes the jockeying

THE HELTERSKELTERISH progress of Liverpool's Militants goes on. Still dizzy with their success at getting on top of the Temporary Co-ordinating Committee (TCC) set up to replace the city's suspended District Labour Party (DLP), they've now been cast down — again. Labour General Secretary Larry Whitty has invalidated their elections of officers for the TCC and restricted the body to organising the local elections under the guidance of the regional organiser.

Former DLP president Tony Mulhearn, now also former TCC chair, is pledging defiance, but it unlikely to carry it out. Militant's most likely tactic is to disrupt meetings in an attempt to wear down Labour officials, but they would then have to take the blame for any failures in the May elections. Fulham's Militant-free success already indicates that they'll be the cause of any failures in the results.

During their brief reign on the TCC, Militant have already provoked an Independent Black candidate to stand against Labour, by the expedient of blocking Liz Drysdale of the Liverpool Black Caucus from getting on the panel of council candidates. They also voted down Vicky Roberts for the second year.

Last time her appeal against them was upheld, and it's expected that it, and Liz Drysdale's, will be supported again this year. But angry Blacks already dubious of Labour's credentials since the Samson Bond affair are now running Delroy Burris in Granby ward. Ironically they're threatening the chances of Dave Leach who combines being one of the 48 surchargees and one of Militant's most vociferous critics especially over their policies on racism.

Coombes nominated

Meanwhile, as predicted, Keva Coombes, former leader of the Merseyside County Council, has now been persuaded (*NS* 28 March) to accept nomination for the city council. Although he isn't a candidate for the 8 May elections, there seems an increasing possibility that the appeal of the 48 against disqualification will be dropped, causing by-elections in which Keva Coombes would figure prominently.

But now the nominations for the city council have passed, Militant may well sense possibilities for yet another 'campaign' over unseating. Even strongly anti-Militant NUPE workers returned a comfortable majority for a policy of non-co-operation with any caretaker administration replacing the surcharges. The NEC is expected to appoint two full-time Labour Party organisers for Merseyside, for which interviews were held last Monday.

This Friday (18 April) will see the NEC meeting at which it is seeking to 'move the goal posts', by reducing the quorum requirement, and so outflank the Seven against Expulsion. Labour expects an injuction, but barristers advise the move is legal. Kinnock's NEC allies don't want to take risks in the run up to May local elections so the actual disciplinary proceedings against Militant will be delayed to a later date.

Constitutional move

With an eye to the future, Tribune group MPs have been considering a proposal from Sheffield MP Richard Caborn for a new Appeals Committee. Modelled on the AUEW's National Appeals Committee, it would comprise five lay members elected from Annual Conference, two from constituencies and one each from unions, socialist societies and the women's section.

It would take over responsibility for hearing appeals against the NEC, and so perhaps lower political temperatures, and diminsh recourse to the courts. Labour's natinal officers are examining the constitution with a view to judge-proofing it. The Tribune Group's initiative is likely to be given serious and sympathetic consideration. ●

The Guardian

Downhill all the way now for the 'Seven against Expulsion'?

'HUNT THE MOLE' BY BNFL SELLAFIELD

A SELLAFIELD WORKER has been sacked following a crack-down at the plant under the Official Secrets Acts. Philip Cundy, a 28 year old fitter at the Calder Hall section of the works, was dismissed on 13 March for 'misconduct'.

According to local sources he had been talking to the media about his work, but neither Cundy, his union the AUEW, nor the management will confirm this while disciplinary proceedings are in progress. Cundy's second appeal against dismissal was heard this Tuesday at the company's headquarters in Risley, Warrington.

The company warned workers not to speak to reporters in February, a week after a pump leaked plutonium nitrate and news of the incident reached the press via the workforce. Since then management have been anxious to unearth moles in the plant and have been monitoring all outside telephone calls.

But given the atmosphere of paranoia the crackdown has engendered, along with the intonation of 'threats to jobs' which greets all criticism from both inside and outside the plant, it seems unlikely the BNFL have tracked down their quarry. For Cundy was an open supporter of Greenpeace — though the organisation has been quick to deny any contact with him.

Cundy's workplace, Calder Hall, is the original 'Atoms for Peace' Magnox reacter which the company claims only generates nuclear power. But the distinctions between the power and weapons programmes have always blurred at Sellafield, and Calder Hall produces both weapons-grade and fuel-grade plutonium. Workers all over the Sellafield site have to live with the contradictions of being covered by the Official Secrets Act on the one hand while the company justifies its activities as a generator of electricity on the other.

However there are signs that this double think is becoming increasingly difficult for workers to tolerate, especially now that their public support is needed. At last week's inaugural meeting of a local all-party 'Friends of Sellafield Society', whose main aim is to counter negative media image of Sellafield, fears were expressed that unless the Society campaigns for the repeal of the Official Secrets Act, workers would feel unable even to express their positive views about the plant.

The Seascale branch of the Labour Party is also adopting a new position on the issue. Though dominated by BNFL workers, it recently called for a separation between the nuclear power and weapons programmes — which would theoretically put plants like Calder Hall and workers such as Cundy outside the jurisdiction of the Official Secrets Act.

Ruth Balogh

Stonehenge

WATCH OUT for an interesting legal judgement this week, a test case relating to charges brought after the 'battle of Stonehenge' last June (NS *7 June 1985). One of the defendants, Peter Mastin, is due to be in the High Court this Thursday (17 April) asking for judicial review. He's trying to get a Crown Court jury hearing for the 30 in all who are accused of causing £6,000 of criminal damage to bean and grass fields. Salisbury magistrates have ruled that the £6,000 should be divided as it were in equal shares among the 30. This has the effect of barring them from Crown Court and jury trial, which only looks at cases where individuals are charged with causing in excess of £400 worth of damage.*

Jane Dibblin

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Oxfam pressured to scale down Ethiopian relief

OXFAM is under pressure from staff inside the charity to scale down its £6 million programme of relief and development in Ethiopia. 'You can't say we'll stay anywhere for ever, regardless,' is this week's guarded official comment from Marcus Thompson, Oxfam disasters officer.

The military Dergue government's controversial resettlement and 'villagisation' policies are worrying many staff on the spot. 'It's likely to take many years before people who have gone through the trauma (resettlement) will ever again be able to be self-sufficient', declares a confidential internal memo.

Oxfam's official line is that while it has privately complained to the Dergue about 'abuses' in resettlement and will not actively support the scheme, it will not oppose the forced movement of 1½ million people from the arid north to the wetter west and south, as such. But 'this position is now becoming untenable' writes Ethiopian field director Hugh Goyder. 'If potentially prosperous areas are being depopulated and thousands of self-sufficient families are being moved against their will, then the policy itself is wrong.'

He's equally critical of the 'villagisation' of Oromo people in the south of Ethiopia: 'The unspoken truth is that "control" will be easier once people are grouped into larger units'. The Dergue say water and health services will be easy to supply to villages but Goyder argues bringing people together may increase health hazards.

Oxfam tightrope

Oxfam is walking a tightrope in Ethiopia, balancing the £6 million it spends in Dergue controlled areas with another £3 million allocated to aid zones controlled by the dissident Eritean and Tigrayan liberation forces. The EPLF and TPLF claim to control most of the rural areas in their two provinces.

Ethiopian drivers carrying food supplies for Oxfam have been beaten-up by the Dergue military when they've refused to transport settlers to new areas. But such incidents have to be balanced against the needs of 6 million Ethiopians the World Food Programme says are still threatened by famine.

'It was definitely felt at the committee meeting in January that we could do more good by staying in', say Oxfam. But since then relations with the Dergue haven't improved. The charity's field directors for the Horn of Africa meet in Khartoum on 16 May, when the decision to stay may well be in the balance.

John Tanner

Oh Calcutt!

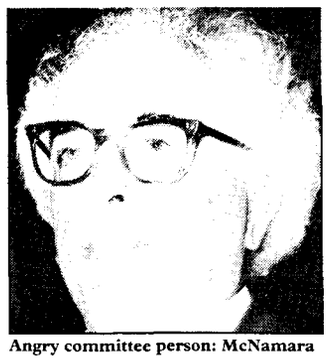
WITH ONLY THE LORDS left to look at the Armed Forces Bill, which went through its Report stage in the Commons last week, it seems to be all-up with the latest effort to bring Britain into line with NATO partners in the treatment of Services homosexuals.

Students of the increasingly-overt Conservative hostility to gays for electioneering motives (Tebbit's 'anti-gay' card played in his St James's Church, Piccadilly, speech against 'permissiveness' on 9 April; the Winston Churchill obscene publications Bill returning to the Commons on 25 April) now wait for the Calcutt Report.

This is the enquiry by David Calcutt QC into the Cyprus base 'spy trial' of last November, a fiasco for the Ministry of Defence in which despite 'confessions' of homosexual behaviour produced by the prosecution, a jury threw out spying charges against young servicemen.

The Report was handed to the MoD last Wednesday, 9 April, and will be published, according to a Commons answer this Tuesday, as soon as security services and the Defense minister himself have examined it.

The striking coincidence about this Calcutt timing is that the Conservative-dominated quinquennial Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill refused a motion of adjournment until publication of Calcutt's findings. Embarassments to come?



UPP

Angry committee person: McNamara

Rum committee

The Committee also:

- declined to hear oral witnesses on behalf of change, offered by Campaign for Homosexual Equality and by At Ease
- declined (despite valiant efforts by Kevin McNamara, Labour MP for Kingston upon Hull North) to include in its report to the Commons the fact that there is a Conservative Group for Homosexual Equality, and that it sent evidence.

Andrew Lumsden

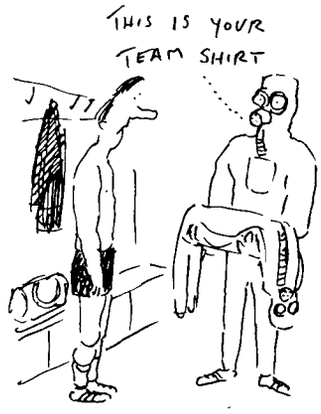
MISCELLANY

Trifling error

Transport Secretary Nicholas Ridley, who has just dismissed enquiries about share dealing while in office, is all set to win a Brittan-sized black eye in a few weeks time. The Transport Act which he forced through both Houses of Parliament, virtually ignoring his own department's experts and those in the bus industry as 'vested interests', threatens to blow up in his face. In the midst of its passage through Parliament, he inexplicably decided to transfer the *assets* of the Metropolitan bus organisations to the new Passenger Transport Authorities, certain to be overwhelmingly Labour-dominated. He left their *liabilities* with their professional advisors, the Passenger Transport Executive. When one of the latter's chiefs, a Conservative chartered accountant, pointed out that this means they will begin life as bankrupt organisations unable to trade he was initially told to ignore the little legal difficulty. Not being the son of a Viscount, he replied: 'I am not accustomed to distinguish between the laws I obey and those I ignore!' The voice of One Nation Toryism at last!

Playing footsie

From their apparently bottomless crock of gold BNFL's Sallafield management have made their latest image boosting move by spending £50,000 to buy a rugby player for the



local Whitehaven Rugby League side. The 25-year-old former Wales and British Lions player Robert Ackerman became the second costliest RU player to turn professional when he was signed for Whitehaven last week. The costly deal is hoped to boost what Sellafield Management describe in local advertisements as their image as 'sports loving BNFL'. And Tories talk about 'Black lesbians for Nicaragua on the rates'. . .

When doesn't it?

Miscellany was once queuing for a ticket at the Westminster underground office and idly wondering where the tramp in front had sprung from, among all the neat commuters, only to realise that it was Denis Healey. Which has nothing to do with anything, except that there's a nice underpass from the Commons to the tube, and in it for some days, glaring at Labour, Tories and Alliance alike, has been one of those posters in white letters on a red background yelling *Ulster Says No!* — to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, of course. Since Ulster swung the vote against Sunday trading, the wags are pretending the poster is *really* Paisleyite Sabbatarianism.

Of rigs and shares

Well, well, a reverse for our person with the pin. Those Norwegian chefs have ensured that our share tip of two weeks ago, a sell on Britoil, has not performed to expectation, and instead of dropping in price has, err, defied gravity. The thinking behind that original tip was that at the then prevailing oil price, $10 per barrel, Britoil would find themselves strapped for cash when it came to paying their dividend. But those contrariwise Norwegians obviously read the NS and decided that the honour of Britoil was at stake. So they went on strike, closing down their oil rigs, and pushed the price up to its current level of around $13.50 per barrel . . . tut tut. Our advice is to hang on for another week, and if the pesky Norwegians don't go back to work — buy back in, and suffer the mild loss (about 3 per cent at the moment). You'll be consoled to learn that last week's tip, a sell on Dixons, is performing to the manner born, and showing a happy profit for your favourite cause. All is not lost at the New Statesman Stock Exchange Collection Can Project, *to ensure that the same remains true for your good selves, only play with pocket money.*

De mortuis (again)

Judging by your energetic letters, most of you dispute our allegation in last week's *NS* that music critics failed to give the true gay cultural context of the Pears-Britten collaboration in their 4 April obituaries on Pears. Good, we're all for debate. You won't be buying *The Times*, but for monitoring reasons let's record this weaselly description of British censorship of Genet's work, in their large 16 April Genet obituary: 'There was stronger resistance in England and America [than in France] to the importation of his work [which] had to wait until the early 1960s before being translated'. Omitted facts which ought to have been clarified: Customs & Excise seized Genet books in 1956 and were *still* seizing them (*Querelle*) in 1984. His first British publisher, Anthony Blond, had to go as high as the DPP to get the work into British hands, over 20 years after the French authorities relented. Memo to *Times* obits editor: please dig out and get properly written *all* your file obits on homosexual celebrities.

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SCRUTINY

ARE ICI'S RUNCORN PRECAUTIONS ENOUGH?

A BBC programme this week raises questions about safety precautions at ICI's Castel Kellner plant at Runcorn, producing 600,000 tons of chlorine a year. Are the managers adequately assessing the *real* 'worse case' possibilities, asks *Brass Tacks* and IAN WILLIAMS

A FEW MONTHS AGO we revealed (*NS* 15 November 1985) the worrying levels of mercury found in fish in Liverpool Bay, to which ICI operations up the Manchester Ship Canal appear to be a contributory factor.

Now the company faces criticism about its emergency procedures in the event of any leakages from its on-site chlorine stores at Runcorn. With effect January this year the company has initiated a Public Information Zone (extending 1500 metres from the plant boundary) within which inhabitants should be informed of emergency procedures.

But *Brass Tracks* will describe this Thursday 17 April how the 'worst possible . . . worst credible' event assumed by the managers is the release of a maximum of 20 of the 3000 tons of chlorine usually stored on site. Any leak likely to go beyond the plant boundary triggers 'Operation Cloudburst' in which locals living within the Public Information Zone will be alerted to carry out safety precautions.

Zones for hazardous-chemical plant were created by new regulations that came into force this year after recent disasters here and abroad. ICI considers that in its worst case scenario of a 20-ton leak, it would 'make people cough and have an effect on their chest' in the Information Zone. Beyond that territorial limit, there is no problem — so no need for public information.

But Dr Richard Griffiths, deputy director of Manchester University Institute of Technology's Pollution Research Unit, demurs, quoting a Dutch study which showed for a gradual 20-ton release no less than 50 per cent fatalities up to 1300 metres, 5 per cent up to 1700 metres and irreversible injuries up to 2300 metres. Britain's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) estimated a death toll of 6000 in an urban area for a quick release of 20 tons.

Chlorine, the original chemical weapon of the trenches in World War One, travels in dense clouds if wind conditions are right. A slight exposure which leaves a healthy adult coughing could leave a child, an asthmatic, or an old person dead, drowned in the fluid in their own lungs. At Ypres 70 tons released by the Germans killed 3000 fit soldiers, and still caused serious injuries 10 kilometres away.

In the event of failure of one of ICI's larger storage tanks, Griffiths using an HSE computer model predicts that the wind could blow its 300 tons of chlorine to engulf the 64,000 inhabitants of Runcorn, most of whom, living outside the arbitrarily chosen 1500 metres perimeter but within a 6000 metre 'hazard range', wouldn't know what was happening, let alone what to do.

Many safety devices

ICI managers deny categorically that any such breakdown could happen, and point to their £10 million safety plant which has multiple fail-safe devices, scrubbing plants, and finally a venting stack to disperse the gas if all else fails. Union Chloride's Bhopal plant had a similarly fool-proof operation — until it failed. But even the safety plant isn't designed to deal with failure of a storage tank.

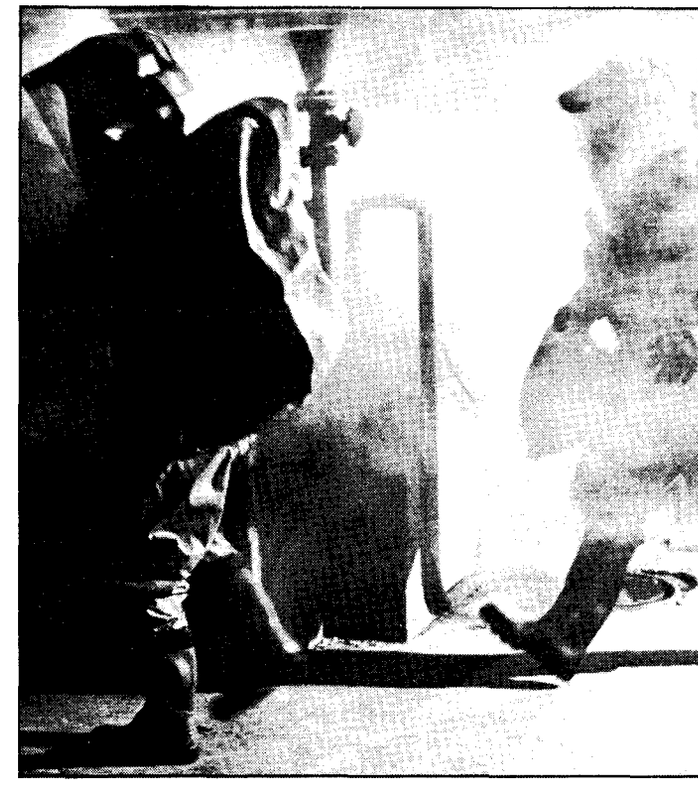
ICI say it 'couldn't possibly happen', 'it's not a credible event that we should take into account', 'once every 500,000 years', that 'it's an event we've considered in order to reject the possibility'. Mexico 1984, 600 dead; Flixborough 1974, 28 dead; Bhopal 1984, 2500 dead; and Seveso, still dioxin-polluted, all bear gruesome testimony to the credibility of the incredible.

But ICI can look closer to home. In 1981 an HSE inspector told a Public Inquiry that the secondary supports for chlorine tanks at ICI's Blackpool plant were in poor condition. One tank was so corroded it was taken out of use. At their Widnes plant across the Mersey, ICI's safety case made to the HSE under the new regulations considered the possibilities of a road tanker crashing at 10 mph and the sudden loss of 145 tons — but decided that the risk was low enough to be negligible.

While the nearby Capenhurst nuclear plant prohibits overflying, there is no such ban over ICI's plant, which lies under the flight path to Liverpool Airport five miles across the Mersey Estuary.

Although a gas cloud escaped affecting children playing near the plant in 1970, ICI is proud that there have been no fatalities outside its boundaries. But even the HSE find it difficult to accept that the company could be so adamant against accepting — and preparing for — the possibility of catastrophic failure.

In a world where chance seems so malign, and humans even more so, to exclude the possibility of disaster seems almost to invite it to happen. Chlorine is a vital substance for what is left of British industry, and ICI provides much needed employment on Merseyside. ICI has nothing to lose except its PR image by preparing for the accidental rupture of the chlorine tanks and providing public information about what to do. The possibility of malicious human action does not seem to have been considered. ●



And if anything *did* happen, who'd have this gear on the backdoor coat-hook?

Council scoreboard

6 March	
Grimsby DC	LAB GAIN (SDP)
13 March	
East Herts DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Lancaster DC	SDP GAIN (Lab)
Waverley DC	CON GAIN (Lib)
South Hams DC	IND GAIN (Lib)
Falkirk DC	Lab hold
South Hams DC	Con hold
20 March	
Broxtowe DC	LAB GAIN (Con)
Bolsover DC	LAB GAIN (Ind)
Chelmsford DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Chesterfield DC	LIB GAIN (Lab)
Clwyd CC	LIB GAIN (Ind)
Bolsover DC	Lab hold
Charnwood DC	Lab hold
Clwyd CC	Lab hold
Thanet DC	Ind hold
27 March	
Aberdeen DC	Lib hold
Nithsdale DC	Con hold
3 April	
Shepway DC	Lib hold
Oswestry DC	Ind hold
Angus DC	SNP hold
10 April	
Hove DC	LAB GAIN (Lib)
Langbaurgh DC	SDP GAIN (Con)
South Hereford DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Berwick-on-Tweed DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Berwick-on-Tweed DC	LIB GAIN (Lab)
Caradon DC	LIB GAIN (Ind)
Dumbarton DC	SNP GAIN (Lab)
Dumbarton DC	Lab hold
Dumbarton DC	Lab hold

See Peter Kellner opposite for commentary.

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Why Fulham could prove a mixed blessing for Labour

PETER KELLNER

ON THE DAY that Labour won Fulham, it also gained a ward in Hove from the Liberals. However, the Liberal/SDP Alliance gained five seats in council by-elections elsewhere.

I had better be careful how I interpret this. Following the *NS*'s last survey of council by-elections, when I drew attention to a spate of Labour gains, the chief whips of the Liberals and the SDP joined forces to admonish me. In their letter, David Alton and John Cartwright accused me of 'pulling out two weeks' results to launch another Labour revival rumour . . . if this is a Labour revival we can't wait for the slump.'

After Fulham, Alton and Cartwright may have to wait. In the past, Alliance politicians have seized on whatever evidence comes to hand to push their bandwagon along. Fair enough: that's politics. But now, it seems, they are reformed characters. Modesty rules. Consistent chaps that they are, I assume that they, and their Alliance colleagues, will refrain from crowing about last week's council victories. After all, they would not wish me to accuse them of 'pulling out one week's results to launch another Alliance revival rumour'.

Still, we analysts have to make the best bricks we can with the straw available. As the table on the facing page shows, the Alliance resumed its forward march in local elections on 20 March — just as the Fulham campaign was getting under way.

So what is happening? In Fulham itself Labour's victory was even better than the raw results indicated. Since 1983 roughly five per cent of Fulham's households have ceased to be privately rented and been converted into owner-occupied flats and houses. Out have gone two to three thousand voters among whom Labour had a clear lead and in have come a similar number of people who — given local property prices — must count among the greatest beneficiaries of the government's tax policies. In other words, the starting point for Labour's campaign was a constituency more Tory than in 1983.

Details of BBC *Newsnight*'s exit poll confirm this: among people who voted in Fulham both in 1983 and last week, the swing to Labour was around 12.5 per cent — two percentage points more than the 'raw' swing. (This calculation does not depend on the sometimes wayward recollection of *how* people voted last time, but on *where* they voted — a more reliable figure.)

For the Alliance, Fulham was exceptionally bad: the first time it has come third in a by-election in this Parliament and the first time an Alliance by-election candidate in England or Wales has failed to reach 20 per cent since the SDP was born.

And yet, and yet . . . those local council by-elections and the nationwide opinion polls, all showing Alliance advances, cannot be dismissed. Perhaps the 'Fulham effect' will change all that: the Scottish Nationalist bandwagon disintegrated after that party's failure in the Garscadden by-election eight years ago, and a similar fate might befall the Alliance now. Any political force, like the SNP then and the Alliance now, that lives by being inflated by electoral success risks being fatally punctured by a poor result.

There is, however, an alternative explanation. Nationally, Britain has three-party politics. But in most constituencies there is still just two-party competition — normally Conservative-Labour or Conservative-Alliance. Fulham falls squarely in the first category, a fact underlined by the number and consistency of opinion polls conducted during the campaign. By polling day, the only rational anti-Tory vote was a Labour vote.

THE SIGNIFICANCE of this point is demonstrated by burrowing into the details of some of the statistical work done on the 1983 results by Clive Payne of Nuffield College, Oxford. Let us suppose that the Tories lose 12 percentage points in every constituency at the next general election.

If Labour and the Alliance each gain six points, then the nationwide distribution of votes would be similar to most recent opinion polls: Labour 34 per cent, Conservative 32, Alliance 32. If those movements were repeated in every constituency, the result would be: Labour 296 MPs, Conservative 250, Alliance 79. Neil Kinnock would almost certainly become Prime Minister, but should the Tories and the two Davids join forces, they would command a Commons majority.

But let us suppose something else happens: that the beneficiary of the anti-Tory swing was whichever party came second last time. In other words, suppose Labour gained 12 points in places like Fulham and the Alliance gained 12 points in places like Ryedale (to take a constituency at random). Then the outcome would be rather different: Labour 319, Conservative 163, Alliance 141. The Tories would only just hold on to the right to be the official opposition. The Alliance, paradoxically, would have more MPs but less leverage: on these figures Labour could expect to survive comfortably for some time as a minority government.

In reality things will be messier. But the thrust of the point remains: if there is a floating anti-Tory vote, willing to anchor in whichever harbour provides the most secure haven, Mrs Thatcher could be in bigger trouble than she realises.

Last year's county council elections provided some evidence that this is what is happening. Both Labour and the Alliance did well in their target areas. Robert Clements, a statistician in the House of Commons library, added up the votes in each of 310 parliamentary constituencies and found that the Tories 'lost' 87 — 62 to Labour and 25 to the Alliance. Tory losses were significantly greater than they would have been without tactical — or, more accurately, intelligent anti-Tory — voting.

Overall, Labour's share of the vote rose 8.6 percentage points compared with 1983, while the Alliance's share remained unchanged (not so very different from Fulham, as it happens). In Labour's target seats, however, Labour scored 3 points better, and the Alliance 3 points worse, than the national average. In the Alliance's target seats those variations were roughly reversed: Labour scored 3 points worse and the Alliance 4 points better than the average.

Those variations may not seem very great. Yet they would be enough, repeated in a general election, for the Tories to lose around 30 seats more than they would expect on a uniform swing calculation. Moreover, council elections are likely to understate tactical voting. In an Alliance target constituency, for example, there may well be individual wards where Labour is the effective anti-Tory challenger.

It is true that there has been little tactical voting in past general elections; but never before have there been so clearly two kinds of two-party contest. Next time, any anti-Tory voter is likely to know which candidate is the Conservative-beater.

There will still be some genuine three-way battles: and if Labour is to win an overall majority it must gain seats where it came third last time — although usually not far behind the Alliance. (The 'top ten' such seats are: Renfrew West & Inverclyde, Clwyd South West, Edinburgh South, Erith & Crayford, Strathkelvyn & Bearsden, Cambridge — where Shirley Williams is standing for the SDP — Southampton Itchen, Edinburgh Pentlands, Stevenage and Calder Valley.)

If the Alliance keeps ahead of Labour in such seats, it is almost impossible for Labour to form a majority government. So, if the notion of the thinking citizen's anti-Tory vote takes hold, it could bring mixed blessings to the Left. And if Fulham's voters provided a glimpse of that in action, the people's party should be a trifle wary before it throws its collective hat in the air. □

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REBELS ARE READY BUT HAVE NOWHERE TO GO

If the Falklands reversed the waning momentum of Thatcherism, helping bomb Libya is likely to intensify the Conservatives' growing disarray. BILL SCHWARZ reports on their current impasse as some try to move out from under Thatcher's stamp

IN THE AFTERMATH of the Fulham by-election Norman Tebbit went out of his way to welcome the Labour victory. It marked the return, he said cheerfully, of the familiar two-party slog. Mrs Thatcher dismissed her party's defeat with the more banal consolation of 'mid-term blues'.

However it requires little perspicacity to see that the Conservative Party is in a mess. Taking only the past week, the swing from Conservative to Labour at Fulham was unusually high at 11 per cent; in the Commons the government has been forced into the extraordinary position of imposing a three-line whip on Sunday trading, of all things; and the current Unionist backlash in Northern Ireland is on any count exceedingly dangerous.

Taking a longer view, in the past year Mrs Thatcher's position has suffered a battering. At the height of the Westland affair she looked for the first time really vulnerable. Tory backbenchers are frightened. Many face the possibility that their political futures will be cut short. As the campaign to win the next general election emerges, so does the struggle to succeed Thatcher. In combination, they are imposing a serious strain on the unity of the Conservative Party.

The core of the party's inner difficulties is the incoherence of the various forces pressing for reconstruction. This is not just a question of policy; there is now no shared conception of the political identity of Conservatism.

Twice this century dissidents within the party have launched a bid to create a popular Conservative radicalism; in each case, although the immediate objectives ran aground, the long-term effects in reconstructing an identity for Conservatism were of historic significance. Joseph Chamberlain led the first bid at the turn of the century. The immediate turmoil inflicted on the party lasted almost a decade. But in the process the Chamberlainites gave to Unionism the raw material to create a new political identity in an age of mass democracy. The ultimate beneficiary was Stanley Baldwin who in the 1920s retrieved those elements of the original Chamberlain programme which fitted his own vision of an anti-socialism premised on the Empire and 'constitutionalism'.

The second attempt was initiated by Enoch Powell in the 1960s. He was outrageous in his espousal of free-market economics, determined to detonate the concept of social rights which lay at the heart of the Butskellite historic compromise, and made an intoxicating populist racism his own. He overhauled the idea of the Conservative nation, giving it a potent popular appeal, and allied it to a new authoritarian constitutionalism which he heralded in his 1970 speech inventing 'the enemy within'. These ideas burned through the party. In the process Powell himself very nearly burned out. The beneficiaries, in this instance, were Mrs Thatcher and Sir Keith Joseph who after the collapse of the Heath goverment in 1974 conducted their own wayward and retarded conversion to an 'authentic' Conservatism.

On the back of internal party struggles, a new politics of modern Conservatism was born. The radical and populist ambitions incubated in the 1970s freed Conservatives from the managerialism of the Butskellite inheritance to be active agents in making a future that would 'kill socialism'. It was a more revengeful project than Chamberlain's.

May 1985: Francis Pym launches his Centre Forward anti-Thatcher group at the Oxford Union — it never raised more than a whimper

Observer

THIS WAS THE promise. In practice Thatcherism proved far less adventurous than its zealots had hoped. The political and social constraints were formidable. The governing institutions of Old England did not welcome this emergent poujadist radicalism — with the singular exception of the City, which had most to gain from crushing the labour movement. Such conservative strongholds as the House of Lords, the Church, the ancient universities

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and the legal profession have at various times been drawn into confrontation. Unlike the City, they cannot afford to be castigated as narrow, class-based institutions. When the Conservatives came to power in 1979 even the putative cadres of the Thatcherite future, the independent businessowners, found themselves in the bewildering situation of a traumatic increase in bankruptcies and liquidations.

But most damaging of all to right-wing populism is that it requires the widespread destruction of popular social and civic rights, such as health and education services, and local government. Even those who felt the rhetoric of Thatcherism was for them could swiftly find that — as pensioners, as ratepayers, as trade unionists — they were anything but winners. Far from expanding their social basis, the Thatcherites time and again saw it ebbing away.

The war with Argentina was crucial in reversing this process for over a year, and decisive in securing the election victory for the Tories in 1983. However very nearly one third of Conservative voters in the election were uncertain whether they would vote for the party next time round. In that electoral landslide the popular support for the Conservative Party was much more fragile than it appeared at first sight. Since then, vaunted popular successes, like the sale of British Telecom and of council houses, look tarnished beside the relentless rise in unemployment and homelessness, and the decay of popular services.

Now we are living through the exhausted radicalism of the Thatcher project. The first priority for the Conservatives is to regenerate popular support. But how? There is the option of blindly pushing forward, whipped on by the exhortations of General Tebbit. Or they could attempt some greater accommodation with the centre, whilst remaining distinct from the SDP. Either way the scramble for new policies will not in itself be sufficient. The long-established framework of constitutionalism is itself weakening, as it was in the Chamberlain-Baldwin era. Powell, prophet of the new Conservatism, sinks his remaining teeth into the Tory rule of law in the name of defending it.

Perhaps inevitably, there is an impasse. If the radicalism of the early Thatcher politics has waned, all the significant strands of contemporary Conservatism bear its imprint. No new identity can be conjured out of the blue. This is the dilemma faced by the Conservative dissidents. To break from the central Thatcherite principles would mean dispensing with the most familiar landmarks in contemporary Conservatism.

This has always proved a major problem for the Wets. They were never able to organise an effective alternative philosophy of Conservatism which could come close to matching the populist reach of the Thatcherites. On many of the fundamental objectives, if not the means, they found themselves in agreement with the prevailing orthodoxy. The Tory dissident who has most clearly devised a coherent alternative has been Heath. But, true to his commitment of October 1974, this has been developed within the context of a 'national' solution in the guise of coalition. It is not Heath's petulance that has isolated him in the party so much as the fact that, like a reincarnation of Austen Chamberlain, he has foresaken the job of fashioning a specifically Conservative politics.

This has always proved a major problem for the Wets. They were never able to organise an effective alternative philosophy . . .

The clear division inside the Conservative Party between wet and dry has now dissolved into a much less clear set of factions. In the final weeks of 1984 the party sustained a series of shocks, culminating in January 1985 with a full-blown sterling crisis which laid to rest the Chancellor's reputation for wizardry. From this moment, coinciding with the end of the miners' strike, the party began to regroup. Former Thatcherite loyalists, of whom John Biffen is the most representative, disengaged from the Thatcher-Tebbit axis, while simultaneously repudiating the Wets. For although he has edged out of Mrs Thatcher's orbit his policies are still based on social-market economics and on the authoritarian constitutionalism which has to shore the free market up.

Divisions in the party are now manifold and fierce. The chaos at the Department of Education is symptomatic. In the lobbies and select committees revolts are occurring all the time. But they are perplexingly formless.

The most telling incidents concern the two most long-standing contenders for the leadership, Heseltine and Walker. The fanfare with which Heseltine announced his commitment to a 'caring capitalism' and the British national interest was speedily trumped by Thatcher's discovery of a 'popular capitalism' and at least recouped by her retreat on British Leyland. For all the differences in their economic strategies, Heseltine has been unable to present a convincing case for a revised Conservatism. Nor have the challengers got an alternative politics. Nowhere was the logic of 'the enemy within' so clearly articulated, and retribution so forcefully exacted, as in Heseltine's battle with CND or Walker's with the NUM. This is indeed part of the unacknowledged Powellite inheritance which lies close to the heart of present-day Conservatism.

Despite the awkward oscillations of the Home Secretary the same is also true on social issues. Here the imprint of the radical right programme of the 1970s is even harder to break, for it was on these apparently 'non-party' matters that the Conservatives made the running as a populist force, and on which Labour has been most myopic. The debates on family life, education, law and order, sexual violence, even now are largely conducted according to the Tory agenda. This is too great a prize for the potential Conservative usurpers to ditch.

Yet it is on these issues that Thatcherism has achieved so little for its popular following. When Tebbit tries to rally the troops on the great Tory issues of social breakdown and degenerate youth he is forced to search for his 'enemy within' in the distant '60s — not the agencies which his government has controlled for the last seven years. If the Conservative party is to renew its vigour to win the next election it needs a new enemy to fight. The problem for the dissidents, desperately searching for a new cause, is that their enemy is either the same as Thatcher's; or it is Thatcherism itself, in which they are so heavily implicated. Its legacy will remain with the party for the foreseeable future. □

Bill Schwarz is a lecturer at North East London Polytechnic and is writing From Churchill to Thatcher, *a book on Conservative politics.*

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TRAILS OF DIRT FROM INSIDE BOSS

Confessions of an ex-secret agent are good news for the publisher. But what of the hapless victims of false allegations? DENIS HERBSTEIN reports

HE WANTED to publish the sort of book, Allen Lane once said, 'which, if the vicar called, you wouldn't hide under a cushion (but would) put on the table to let people know the sort of person you were.' Last year, Penguin basked in the sunshine of its 50th birthday. It was well deserved. Penguin's initial reputation for caring, left-of-centre books has melded easily with a recently-acquired instinct for the market-place.

But it is by no means easy to publish all those 'specials' without the occasional blunder. So it was with *Inside BOSS*, 'the biggest problem book we've had,' as one of their directors put it in the days when they talked publicly on the matter. The book is by Gordon Winter, convicted burglar, self-styled arms dealer turned spy, who claims a part in the killing, imprisonment, blackmailing or ruin of many people, only to 'defect' home to Britain, a reformed character. The sincerity of that conversion has to be proved by spilling the beans as widely as his imagination allows.

Gordon Winter's book may or may not be elaborate hoax, an essay in disinformation at its subtlest, but the effect has been to wreak havoc on those already targeted by the South African government. Penguin, illustrious publisher around the world, provided the imprimatur of its considerable reputation.

Winter appeared on British television in 1979 to announce that he was now clean. One BOSS escapade he could instantly confirm was the setting up of Peter Hain, a hate figure in South Africa, in a Barclay's Bank robbery. Impressed, Hain put Winter onto his agent, Tessa Sayle, who sold the book to Penguin.

The editor who accepted it was Neil Middleton. His impeccable radical credentials were recently on show at the Penguin anniversary exhibition in the Festival Hall: Ché Guevara, Regis Debray, the Marx library were there, but Middleton also commissioned Agee's inside job on the CIA and Marighella's handbook on guerrilla warfare.

By the time the Winter manuscript arrived, Penguin was in the charge of Peter Mayer, hard-nosed New Yorker, and Middleton's days were numbered.

Exiled South African lawyer, Albie Sachs, discussed the manuscript with Middleton, who also asked Hain to go through it. 'I did a fairly detailed memo on those things I knew to be wrong. I recommended publication. Even if five per cent was embellishment, it gave a rare insight into how BOSS worked'. The manuscript and Hain's comments went to Roy Furness, Penguin solicitor at the time, who wanted Winter to come to London. 'He said he would if we gave him an armed escort. He mentioned that he was frightened of the Kray brothers. I did not know where reality began and ended with Winter,' Middleton says disarmingly.

So Middleton went to see his author in a remote hideway in county Sligo. At least he could assure himself that Winter did indeed have those reference files, the product of two decades of assiduous spying. 'I even saw mine. It was amusingly inaccurate, but not hugely.'

THE TERRIBLE flaw in the book is that Winter dredges up over a thousand names of people and organisations, some in passing, others across an entire chapter. But police files, in whatever country, are notorious for recording not just verifiable facts, but rumours, hurtful surmise, hopeful fancy. Winter is not overly concerned with the distinction.

Changes were certainly made. Middleton says the manuscript was 'sanitised' by the lawyers. But even before *Inside BOSS* went on sale the smell of writs was in the air. Journalists with review copies made their own simple checks. One phoned Matthew Nkoana, a black exile living in London, to confirm that he had been working for the Pretoria special branch and had shopped a white man who was later hanged for leaving a bomb at a railway station. No, said Nkoana, I was in London by then, running the Pan-Africanist Congress office. Winter, phoned by the same journalist, said he had erred (thought it is more than likely the mistake was intentional).

Told of the error some days before publication, Middleton said he would wait for a legal complaint before taking action. Yet, in an exile community with long memories, the false allegation might have endangered life. Middleton, now chief editor at Pluto Press: 'It is not so much that it is expensive to stop the

Inside BOSS: still circulating, uncorrected, to thousands of readers

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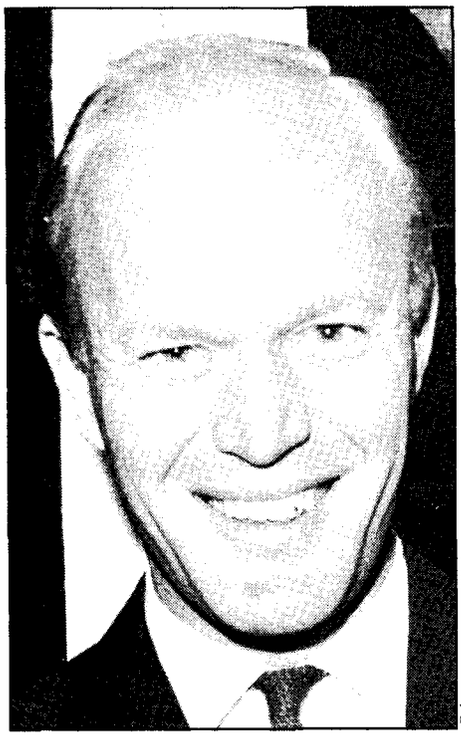

PA

Gordon Winter: proving the sincerity of his conversion

machine running, it is impossible. Sales copies went out six weeks before publication, you could not recall them or put in a slip.'

But the book does carry a last-minute corrective footnote and a slip declaring that Peter Bessell, former Liberal MP, had not worked for the CIA or been guilty of perjury (Bessell has since died). And Adelaide Tambo, wife of the African National Congress leader Oliver Tambo, received a swift public apology for a lengthy passage in which Winter claimed to have insinuated himself into the family home in London's Muswell Hill.

The smaller fry found it considerably harder to clear their names. With no legal aid allowed in libel cases, they could not even sound out a solicitor without some ready cash. Many of the victims were living a tenuous existence, relying on British or third world travel documents, or simply suspicious of the courts of a strange country, or fearful of the hidden hand of BOSS. (Winter claims that BOSS infiltrated London's main postal sorting offices and bugged telephones.)

Penguin was hampered by the fact that Gordon Winter could not come to Britain to defend himself. He could have faced arrest, for faking British passports for BOSS agents in black Africa, among other potential charges. Maybe he could have substantiated some of the facts. But the publishers should have realised from the beginning that he was not going to be either a reliable or an available witness.

Complainants now produce wads of letters which to'd-and-fro'd between their solicitors and Penguin's. Lawyers for Ben and Mary Turok, refugees from Cape Town, wrote exasperatedly in February 1984, more than two years after their first letter, noting that they had not heard from Penguin solicitor Peter Carter-Ruck since October the previous year, and that they would start proceedings unless they got a settlement.

The Turoks finally got their apology and damages in May 1985. Gordon Byard, then company secretary, speaks of dozens of complaints, with minor payments made, a few hundred pounds here and there to avoid proceedings. But he added: 'Our solicitor's bill is higher than the amount paid out.'

In February this year, in the tenth, and probably last, public admission of error, Penguin paid 'a suitable sum' to Richard Gibson, a black American working for the GLC, for passages saying he had worked for the CIA.

The largest pay-out went to Matthew Nkoana. 'If Penguin Books really wanted a settlement we would not have gone to court,' he says. 'But they were adamant about taking Winter's word. Now, that I couldn't accept. Hell, I made war with the South African government.' Three years and many letters later, Nkoana fought his case for nine days in the High Court and won. The jury awarded him £12,000, which was rather less than Penguin paid their lawyers.

Nor do apologies and court cases cure the evil. Last month Camden borough library services in London were still circulating six copies of the multi-libellous *Inside BOSS*. All of them were out to borrowers.

As any journalist knows, even the most checked-out 'fact' may not hold up. But once the book was published, Penguin should have leant over backwards to listen to the complainants. Freedom to publish must be accompanied by the right to set the record straight. Instead Penguin used its position and its wealth to deny complainants that right. □

SAFE IN THEIR HANDS?

STRANGE MEN MOVE INTO NHS

PHIL COHEN reports on the insidious management moves to change the nature of our health services

BRIGADIER JOHN ALWAY was until 1 February this year the Commander of Supply to the British Army of the Rhine. He is now the general manager of Tower Hamlets health authority presiding over the health care of 144,000 people in one of the most deprived parts of the country. His salary has not been disclosed but is likely to be in excess of £30,000.

The Brigadier, who has no previous background in the NHS, is one of the 13 ex-officers from the armed forces appointed as general managers of health authorities, ostensibly for their reputed 'leadership qualities', which will no doubt be much appreciated by the low-paid nursing and ancillary troops now under his command.

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SS7

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Another new manager is Hugh Thompson in charge of care for the mentally handicapped in Stockport. He spent over 30 years in the Royal Navy, including command of the Polaris submarine HMS Renown, before spending two and a half years as the submarine specialist on the Embassy staff in Washington DC followed by another two in charge of the submarine school at Gosport, Hants.

From the commercial sector Tony Stapleton has gone from being merchandising director of Selfridges, the Oxford street store, to taking charge of the prestigious John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford.

On the pretext of controlling manpower in the NHS the government has created these general managers at all levels of the NHS to run health authorities. It is expected that they will dutifully carry out Department of Health policies and cut budgets, increase bed 'throughput' of patients through hospitals and make decisions quicker (ie less consultation).

Armed with the current buzz words from the DHSS of efficiency, cost effectiveness and consumer participation these managers are expected to cut a swathe through the professional traditions of doctors, nurses and ancillaries and bring the sprawling health service to heel. That is how the government sees it. It is one tentacle of a sophisticated Tory approach to the NHS which might be labelled as 'privatisation from within'.

QUITE EARLY ON, the Thatcher administration realised that it would be impossible to hive off the NHS into private hands in the way intended for other public corporations. The outcry over total privatisation of our best-loved public institution would have been political suicide. A move to an insurance-based health service appeared to be too costly and bureaucratic.

Instead the Conservatives have opted to keep the structure intact on the surface while injecting market values and business organisation into the NHS. Apart from the Griffiths managerial reorganisation, the policy has been to encourage private contractors to grab as big a slice as possible of the lucrative NHS market in support services and to squeeze health authorities with tight cash limits so that they are often forced to make cuts and/or seek help from the private medical sector.

Private management consultants now have huge contracts with the NHS. Spending by the DHSS on management consultants has gone up from £411,000 in 1979 to £13.8 million in 1985. It was the chairman of Sainsbury's, Roy (later Sir Roy) Griffiths, who gave Fowler the green light to develop the strategy with his report on the NHS. 'We have been told that the NHS is not concerned with the profit motive and must be judged by wider social standards which cannot be measured. These differences can be greatly overstated. The clear similarities between NHS management and business management are much more important.'

While still based in Germany, Brigadier Alway of Tower Hamlets was already thinking of his customers. A plan was sent out in his name proposing a management shake-up in the district. The post of Chief Nursing Officer, responsible for all nursing resources and decisions, was to be replaced by business-style Directors of Planning, Finance and Personnel. Senior nurses would now report to business managers. Nurses form 50 per cent of the NHS workforce so that managerial control of nursing budgets could be a tremendous cost-cutting boon to the Government — if the NHS labour costs are too high because of unbusinesslike management.

It was the fear that financial criteria would replace nursing decisions that persuaded the traditionally-moderate Royal College of

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Nursing to spend £200,000 on a newspaper campaign arguing that Griffiths had gone too far. Its lobbying rattled the government. One RCN member who saw her job scrapped was Chief Nursing Officer in Oldham Hilda Grimshaw, who said: 'I find it quite unacceptable that the major caring profession will no longer have a role in policy-making in the NHS in Oldham. I almost feel as if the last 20 years of my career have been wasted.'

THE NHS Management Board created in line with Griffiths also exemplifies the government's close links with the private sector. Director of Personnel Len Peach was previously Director of Personnel and Corporate Affairs at non-union IBM and is keen to develop incentive payments for individual employees. Ian Mills, Director of Financial Management for the NHS, is a senior partner in consultants Price Waterhouse, while part-time property adviser DN Idris Pearce is a senior partner in the firm of Richard Ellis. Board chairman Victor Paige was chairman of the Port of London Authority.

Yet much to the annoyance of the Conservative right wing only just over 10 per cent of these general manager posts have gone to people from the private sector. Many were deterred by the short three-year contracts. In many cases the former health administrator got the job and merely changed the title on the door, but in an anxiety to please the government, the end result for the NHS may not prove that different.

Relatively few firms have shared the pickings. Over half the 14 regions have taken on consultants to develop an information technology strategy and in most cases Arthur Andersen have been used. Price Waterhouse and Coopers and Lybrand have been contracted to work on management budgeting and computerisation. At local level districts have used auditors De Loitte's, Coopers and Lybrand and Touche Ross to help with competitive tendering and 'cost improvement' projects, often a hidden way of making cuts.

Through the policy of putting domestic, laundry and catering services out to tender the DHSS also wants to cut the overall health budget and privatise as much as possible.

The potential NHS market for hospital ancillary services was estimated at £175 million by Tory PR firm Michael Forsyth Associates Ltd in 1984. By the end of 1985 private contractors had won 107 tenders with 258 staying with direct labour NHS teams. Even where the contract stays with the NHS the experience has been that the working hours of domestics have been cut by up to half, turning them into part-time workers.

During this government's period in power 20,000 ancillary workers have disappeared from the NHS payroll, with 14,000 going in the last year due to privatisation. In several cases shop stewards are carefully not awarded jobs by private firms. The competitive tendering policy was drawn up after secret talks between the contractors' association and Norman Fowler and at each stage the DHSS has been sensitive to the needs of the private firms. Recently, in answer to criticism from them, the Department issued new instructions to health authorities. For instance it said they could not cancel private contracts for poor performance without the DHSS's consent.

It may be hard for an incoming Labour government to reverse some of these trends in health policy but an alternative strategy must tackle head on some of the values that this government has popularised. Firstly, it must argue that quality of health care is as important as efficiency, that consensus and co-operation (dismissed by Griffiths) are as vital as good management and that higher spending on the NHS is necessary to meet all the future health needs of the nation.

Secondly, it must encourage new relationships between different staff, and between staff and patients. Staff hierarchies have become inflexible over time. The answer is not to ignore professional groups but to release the creative energies and experience of them. For instance, nurses would take on new responsibilities in the community as practitioners in their own right and be part of primary health care teams, doctors would become counsellors as much as medics and ancillaries would have enhanced tasks in modern hospitals and clinics and 'befriend' the patient.

Patients would have new rights through a patients' charter, and have access to their medical records. And it must be realised that Griffiths has meant that health authorities have even less power than before. They are undemocratic bodies distant from their local communities. The issue of accountability and the question of electing local health authorities must be tackled.

While anti-Tories must take the lead in pushing for reform, they must uphold the crucial founding value which Conversatism is destroying: that the NHS is there to ensure that all people have equal access to the best and most appropriate form of treatment. □

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MEDIA

Page Three put into place

MANDY MERCK

ON FRIDAY Clare Short's Indecent Displays (Newspapers) Bill is scheduled for its second reading, and this feminist will be monitoring its progress with decidedly mixed feelings. As an instant exposé of Winston Churchill and co's tolerance for certain types of sexual representation, the Page Three Bill was a terrific tactical move, shifting the debate from the shock-horror of *Sebastiane* to the banality of the bosom. At last the exotic excesses of 'obscenity' were pushed off the political agenda by an overdue consideration of everyday images of women.

But the bill's coincidence with both the announcement of increases in reported rapes *and* the Wapping lock-out tended to close down the very discussion it should have raised. On the left, a new theory of causation seems to have achieved orthodoxy; a theory that the newspaper nude functions not only as figurehead and financial prop to Murdoch's entire empire but also as the lynchpin of female subordination.

Sun readers may be excused for understanding this as an invitation to put the blame on Mame once again, and the Page Three subs haven't been slow to exploit their indignation at 'killjoy lefties'. Last week's pin-ups sported a Big Ben logo and a quintet of Tory members vouching support for their 'parliamentary poppets'. In Thursday's edition 'Sulky Selina' Scott was slagged off for challenging one of them, MP Peter Bruinvels, to submit himself to trouserless scrutiny on BBC's Breakfast Time. And on Saturday the ubiquitous Samantha Fox, who'd appeared on Page Three with said Bruinvels, turned up in torn jeans on ITV to sing her new hit 'Touch Me (I Want Your Body)'. Afterwards Jimmy Tarbuck hugged her in avuncular fashion and marvelled that she was just 19.

I don't think we need Roland Barthes to tell us that the *Sun*'s sales probably aren't suffering from all this, or that its political map has once again been drawn to separate middle-class, pleasure-hating, Labour-voting feminists from innocently pretty working-class women and their gallant Tory protectors. Redrawing that map, however, may require more attention to the tabloids than we've so far been willing to pay.

Three years ago, in the only sensible article I've ever read about the *Sun**, Patricia Holland noted the paper's rejection of 'bureaucratic power disguised as moral and cultural values, the whole range of attempts to put something over on you, to push you around, re-expressed in terms of elevation, education, propriety'.

In that spirit, I think it's worth inquiring why Page Three was singled out for censorship? Why ban the newspaper nude instead of the gallery nude, the cinema nude or the advertising nude? Is it because there's a generic suitability about the naked female figure in fine art contexts and derivatives like advertising, but not in a medium which purports to deal with serious, real-life events?

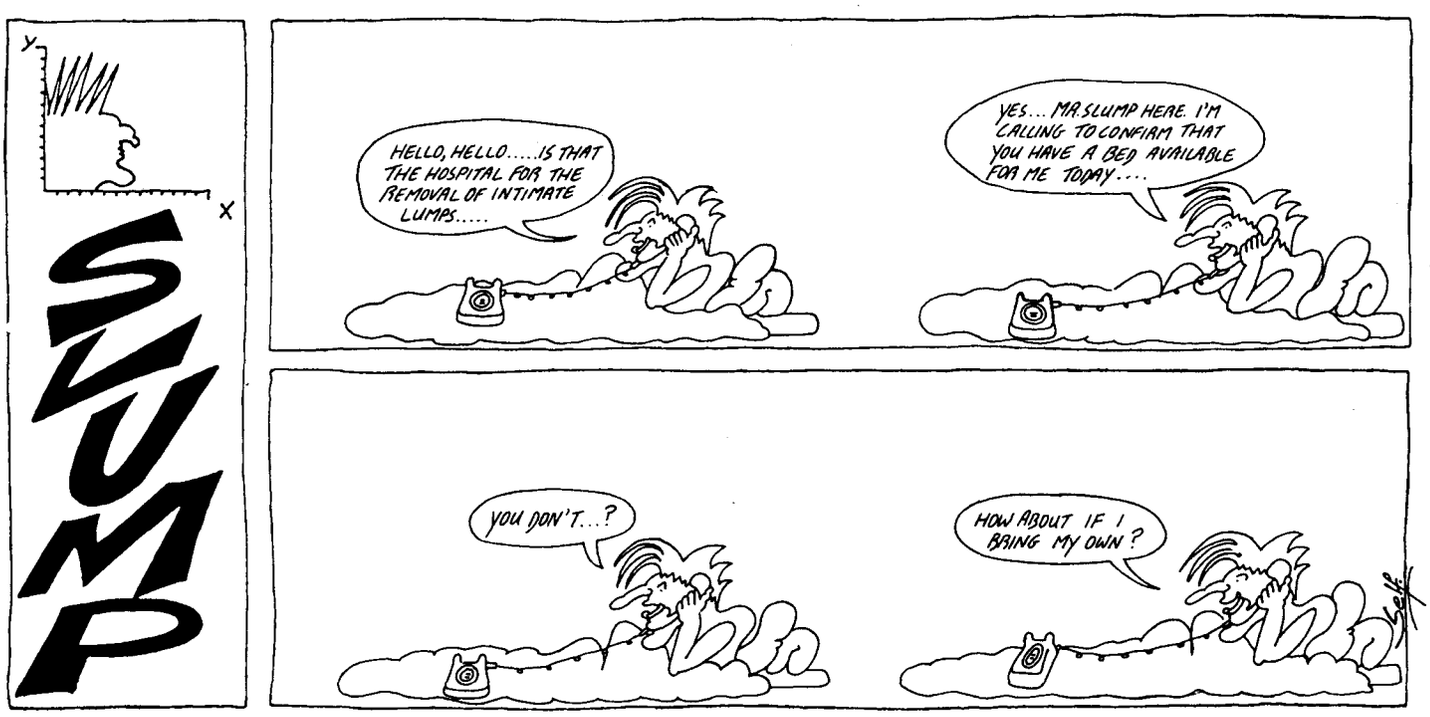
The *Sun*, of course, has always refused that definition of news, drawing its stories from celebrity gossip, crime, sport and television fictions. And since the *Sun*'s stories are almost always about sex, a nude can never be 'gratuitous' in its pages in the way it might be in the *Guardian* (which has to justify such images with human interest reports — the streaker on the pitch, or fashion features — camiknickers make a comeback). The whole point of the *Sun* is to transgress these fusty journalistic rules, while at the same time advancing its own strict code of permissible, heterosexual 'fun'.

This code organises the entire paper — not just Page Three — into a complex web of sexual regulation. Taking the issue of 10 April we have the front page drama of endangered marriage — 'Botham's Wife to Join Him on Tours', page two's 'Vicar in Child Sex Probe', and page six's critique of 'Ealing mother and housewife' Glenys Kinnock's undue influence on Labour defence policy. During the debate on the Churchill Bill, Clare Short argued that outlawing pictures of naked women would 'clean up the *Sun*' and its 'distorted' attitude towards sexuality and sex. I think the attitudes of the 10 April edition would emerge virtually unscathed.

Although the Page Three Bill is unlikely to succeed under this government, there is now a considerable lobby in both feminist and Labour circles to outlaw sexist representation. One widely heard suggestion is a statute parallel to the 'racial hatred' clause of the Public Order Act, although that provision is rarely invoked, and only against direct threats or insults. Meanwhile, everyday sexism — whether upmarket or Sunsational — doesn't threaten the public order, it is its mainstay. Legislating against it will prove an extremely difficult task. □

*in *Screen*, May/June 1983.

Clare Short will address a public meeting of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom Women's Group on 'Rape Reporting and the Display of Women', Wednesday 30 April, Nalgo, Euston Road, London, 6.30 pm.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HOW ABOUT IF I BRING MY OWN?

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DIARY

Anne Smith

Edinburgh

BRITISH RAIL is very coy about the fact that on most overcrowded trains (i.e. most trains) first class seats are available to second class passengers on payment of a supplementary £2. The stickers they put on the train windows to advertise this fact only divulge the information when you get close enough to read the small print. Which is how the drunk Glaswegian and I had the carriage to ourselves all the way to York in an otherwise crowded train . . .

We sat diagonally opposite each other, he at the end of the compartment and I half-way down. I didn't notice him at first, for I was trying to catch up with work. 'Haw hen!' — he apprised me of his existence. I looked up. He was waving a lemonade bottle half-full of some clear fluid. 'Hoozaboot a vodkansoda, eh?' It was 11am and, besides, vodka and soda isn't my drink. I declined.

'I see you're a bit of a reader,' sez he, trying another tack. We agreed we didn't like Catherine Cookson's work. I got back to my own. But not for long. 'Washa highest mountain in Canada?', he demanded, after refreshing himself with another slug from his bottle. I gave up. He told me. 'Washa formula furra circumference o' a circle?', he persisted. I wondered if it was incidents like these that gave the Scots their reputation for respecting education.

○

'You see I'm well-read,' he said, and added bitterly, '— a well-read asshole.' That was it: he'd tapped the wellsprings of fellow-feeling. I too am getting nowhere with being well-read. So it was 'what do you do?' and 'where are you going?' time. 'You wouldnae understand my work if I told you,' he said, trying to sound superior, but giving himself away. 'I've been to Glasgow chasing jobs.' He made himself sound like the man in the Scots proverb who performs the futile exercise of grippin' at fleas. Jobs had eluded him, so he was going back to Scunthorpe. As the journey progressed, so did his need to get to Scunthorpe, till it became an obsession. Every passing guard and passenger was collared and grilled on the subject of when the train would arrive at his stop.

What did I do? 'I'm a journalist.' Labour or Tory? Never mind. '— Anyway it's all shite what you read in the papers. I'm sorry if I swear, but I always swear . . . Thatcher's a c---, Wilson's a c----, Kinnock's a c---- . . .' He litanises on, showing his extensive knowledge of British Prime Ministers, past, present, and yet to come: 'They're all c----s,' he concludes.

Fuck politics, he says, what's your favourite song? I don't have one, not in this context. If I'd said Isobel Baillie singing 'I Know That My Redeemer Liveth' we'd have been on to religion — and that would have been fatal. I reveal that I was an Elvis Presley fan once. But the c----'s dead, he tells me and begins to sing 'Are You Lonesome Tonight?' before breaking off to tell me proudly that his favourite singers are Al Jolson, Elvis Presley, and Perry Como. They're all dead, I protest.

He is incensed. Perry Como is still alive, it seems. I'm tempted to quote Dorothy Parker. 'How can they tell?', but discretion is the better part of travelling with drunk Glaswegian Perry Como fans. He hums a tune. Recognise that? No. 'And you meant to be *educated*? That's Shoo-pang!' Mind you, nobody would ever hear about Shoo-pang these days, him being dead a hundred years, if Perry Como hadn't taken his tune and put words to it and immortalised it.

○

Before we get into a detailed exposition of what Perry Como done for Chopin, we are joined by two young men. Few Scotsmen will waste their time talking to a woman when the Real Thing is available, so he straightaway asks them what is the highest mountain in Canada. Next thing I hear is him complaining aggressively, 'Maysweel talk to the Man in the effin Moon as youse tew guys!' They apologise for not being able to understand a word he says. But *I* understand every word *youse* say,' he retaliates, unappeased. His effort to sound superior fails again through lack of conviction.

We're back to the 'Haw hen, fancy a vodkansoda?' routine, and 'What's the highest mountain *in the world*?' At last we reach his station. He gets up, collects some shabby plastic luggage and makes to go but turns back at the door and says to me with savage shame, 'You're a nice lassie, I'd gi'e ye a kiss, but I'm no' worth it.' He's left before I can answer. I would have kissed him. They're pressing vodka from the grapes of wrath these days.

○

A couple of evenings later I am trapped by two drunk Ulstermen in shiny suits fifteen minutes before closing time. 'There are two great men in this country today. Do you know who they are?' It seems the Irish have the same penchant for general knowledge quizzes as the Scots — either that, or the rabid Protestant variety have Scots ancestors. I give up again. 'Ian Paisley and J. Enoch Powell MP.' Just as well I gave up. I'd never have got that one.

I'm a journalist? Do I remember what Beaverbrook did for Max Aitken? Well, my self-inflicted companion has a rich Dad and can do it for me. What's my number? They'll give me a ring when I'm sober and tell me a story that will rock the country. Am I a Calvinist? Do I realise that John Paul is the Antichrist? When we get to some pointless anecdote about David and Bathsheba, the barmaid in her infinite mercy comes to my rescue.

○

I only want a Welshman now to complete my set. What *do* Welshmen talk about when they're drunk? The thing is, I'm about to find out: next week I'm off to cover the anniversary of the Ffestiniog Railway. Watch this space.

ROGER WODDIS

His greatest fan

'One of the few people in Britain who can, with honest hand on heart, admit to uncritical admiration of the President happens to be the prime minister.'
— Hugo Young, the Guardian

I'm just a call-girl,
Eager to please,
Learning the hard way,
Earning my fees.
Faces are forgotten,
Clients come and go,
But there's one I love to rouse
When he's feeling low.

Standing up for Britain,
Lying down for Ron,
Watching how his eyes light up
When I turn him on.

Standing up for Britain,
Laying Rambo Man,
Proving by the things I do
I'm his greatest fan.

Keep your soft options, my idea
of heaven
Is having it off in an F1-11.

Standing up for Britain,
Servicing the Chief,
He's the one I love to ball,
When he needs me I'm on call,
Giving him relief.

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AP

MISSION: TO KILL GADAFY

THE US has launched its largest single air raid from British bases since World War II. No democratic safeguards against military strikes control Reagan reports CLAUDIA WRIGHT

Gerard Lizett

Left: an F-111 returns to its British base after bombing Tripoli (above)

THE REAL TARGET of the 14 April US attack on Libya was Colonel Muammar Gadafy himself. Notwithstanding all their private differences and bureaucratic wrangling about the mission that is now emerging, what US officials had agreed on was an assassination mission.

US official accounts leave no doubt that the two military bases in Tripoli and Benghazi, where the Libyan leader has his offices and makes his home, were the principal objectives of the US strikes — particularly the Bab al-Azziziya barracks in Tripoli, where Gadafy's wife and children live. This is also why so many civilian residences and foreign diplomatic missions were struck. They are clustered in the heart of Tripoli, not far from Bab al-Azziziya. The two airfields and other military targets US officials say were also hit in the 20-minute air raid were incidental to the real US goal.

Beneath the Administration's rhetoric of self-defence against terrorism — a concept for which the US Congress has failed to agree a statutory definition for almost a decade now — this attack was the culmination of the US government's effort since 1981 to assassinate the Libyan leader. In all of the earlier US plans, the Americans have relied on others — Libyan exiles, Egyptians, hired gunmen — to carry out the attack. This is the first time the Americans have tried to do the job themselves. Like Israeli attempts to assassinate Yasser Arafat in 1982 in Beirut and last October near Tunis, they have used an armada of aircraft. Pentagon officials indicate that between 80 and 100 US military aircraft were flown in the operation — the largest single American air raid since World War II.

It not only failed in that purpose; the downing of one of the attacking F-111 bombers represents potentially the most serious loss of US military secrets in recent US airforce history. It was precisely Pentagon fears of the loss of advanced US aircraft in combat with Soviet-aided Libyan air defences that had limited the 24 March naval operation in the Gulf of Sirte. On that occasion, according to US official sources, USAF pilots were under strict orders to fire radar-homing missiles at an anti-aircraft site from long range and to engage only those Libyan patrol boats that lack effective air defence even against the relatively slow fighter-bombers from US carriers. US military officers had been reluctant to increase the risks of these operations by expanding the number of their targets — especially since the type of laser-guided weapons US aircraft fired over Tripoli require the US pilots to remain in position for a few, highly vulnerable minutes to guide the bombs to their targets.

In the days before the President ordered the

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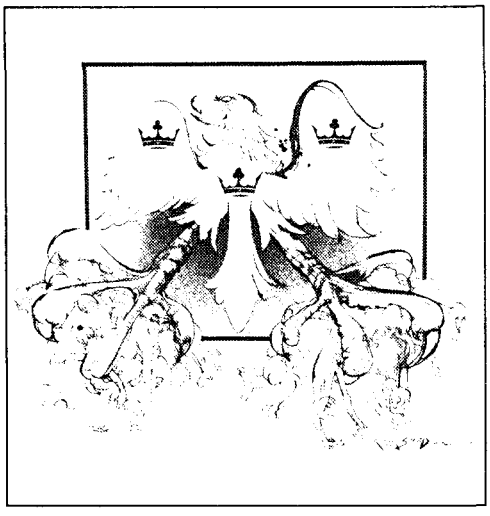
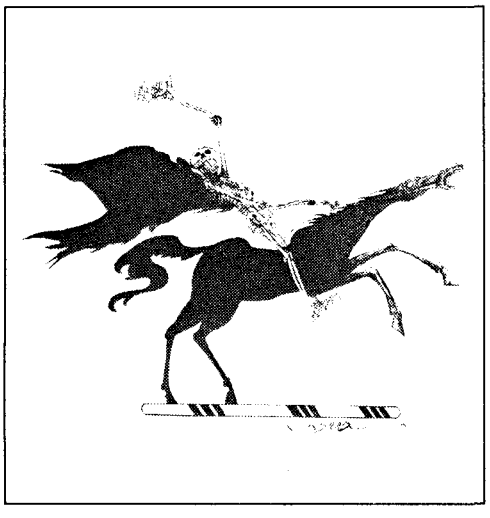
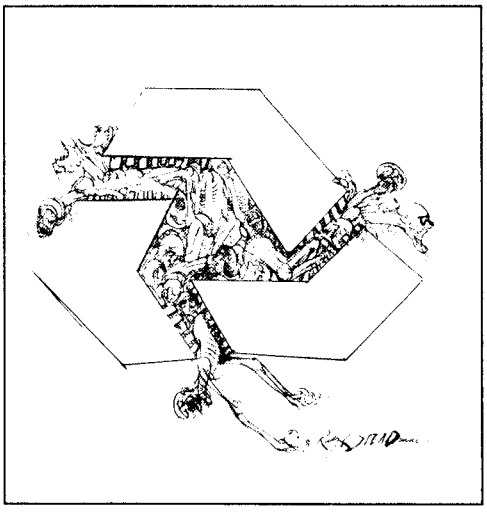
Charged with human suffering.







If you bank with Barclays, the Midland, Lloyds or Nat West, chances are that you enjoy free banking. At the expense of the underprivileged people of Latin America.

The banks wouldn't make such large profits without the crippling repayments they demand on loans to poorer countries.

As usual, the poor bear the brunt of the cost.

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Your donation cannot pay Latin America's debts of £260bn; but it can assist some of the poorest people immediately, by supporting War on Want's health, education, job creation, and women's projects in the region.

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air attack, however, military caution on the part of some Pentagon officers was brushed aside by a flurry of press leaks from other officials (including the US Ambassador to Germany, Richard Burt, and the Supreme NATO Commander, General Bernard Rogers). These leaks were intended to create the appearance of 'incontrovertible' evidence linking the Libyans to the Berlin terrorist bombing of 4-5 April, and thereby pressure the President and the more cautious members of the Administration to decide that, to protect their own reputation and self-image of toughness, they had to attack Libya. Killing Gadafy seemed the simplest and most popular military option available.

THE 10-DAY long campaign of public news leaks and private briefings failed to convince any allied leader — with the possible exception of Prime Minister Thatcher and NATO Secretary General, Lord Carrington — but it did offer the Europeans a more discomfiting insight than they care to admit into the violent obsessions of US officials like Secretary of State George Shultz. The Italian government had a brief glimpse of the American psychopathology during the confrontation last October over who would take custody of the alleged hijackers of the *Achille Lauro*, after they had been forced by US navy aircraft to land at Sigonella air base in Sicily.

The Greek Government got an even more dramatic example of Shultz's fury immediately after the Gulf of Sirte operation last month. Shultz was about to fly from Turkey to Greece for his first official visit. While he had been one of the most ardent advocates of military confrontation with Libya before the 24 March incident — and was again the principal advocate of the 14 April attack — Shultz had apparently not expected that the US Sixth Fleet would start shooting before he had safely left the Mediterranean.

He ordered that his flight between Turkey and Greece — in Greek airspace — be escorted by a squadron of US F-15 fighter-bombers and an aerial surveillance AWACs aircraft. This was hardly a vote of confidence in the defensive screen provided by the three US aircraft carriers to the south, but Shultz was angry, aggressive, and worried. His demand was also a gratuitous insult to the Greek defence forces. US officials say they pressed the Greek government to acquiesce, but it would not. Instead, it offered full Greek Air Force protection, but no entry for the USAF escorts. In return, Shultz promised to abide by that decision. But he was lying — as soon as his aircraft took off for Athens, it was met by the F-15s and AWACs. Greek interceptors rose to compel the US warplanes to withdraw, which they did. Shultz had demonstrated that not even US allies can count on him keeping his head — or his word.

This was plainly the problem for the European allies in the period of 'consultations' before the latest attack. What allied officials have discovered is that in a crisis US tempers are extremely short. The Europeans' reservations carry little weight with the Americans — and US commitments can't be trusted. The Reagan Administration appears incapable of deciding on and maintaining a consensus, either with its allies or within the US bureaucracy itself, for more than a few days — or hours. Pre-emption has become the Administration's method for resolving policy differences. If Thatcher had refused permission for the operation of the F-111's in the Libyan raid, it is conceivable the Administration would have ordered them into the air anyway.

BY THE TIME President Reagan met with Congressional figures to discuss his plan of attack against Libya, it was 4pm Monday afternoon in Washington. By then the F-111 bombers had already taken off from their bases at Lakenheath and Upper Heyford, heading for the Mediterranean.

Members of Congress had been complaining angrily for days that the Reagan Administration was launching military operations without the advance notice and consultation with Congress required by the 1973 War Powers Act. But 'consultation' was not what the President and his aides were offering them. They were not *told* the operation was already under way. They were *not* told the French government had refused to allow the F-111s to overfly French territory on the shortest route between England and Libya.

One senior Congressman entered the room, convinced Thatcher was refusing to permit the British Isles to be used for launching the attack aircraft; nothing Administration officials said revealed that she had changed her mind. He was counting on a show of allied opposition to dissuade the Administration more powerfully than he and other Democrats were themselves willingly to offer, as they prepare for the November mid-term elections.

Instead, the Representatives and Senators were given a briefing designed to convince them, as the President would say on television later, that the US had uncovered 'direct, precise and irrefutable evidence' of Libyan responsibility for the Berlin night club bombing. Thus defined, the issue Reagan outlined for decision was whether the US could risk undermining its international posture by failing to strike. No one in the room disputed the interpretation of the evidence, most of which had already been leaked.

Those Democratic Party leaders who have been most critical of Administration military intervention, including the Speaker, the majority leader, and two whips of the House of Representatives, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and the senior Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, were not at the White House meeting at all.

The Democratic Congressmen who did meet with the President responded with a summary of the risks they thought the action would run, especially if the US missed the so-called terrorist targets, inflicted sizeable civilian casualties, or lost US aircraft and men in the attack. But it was clear the President had already acted and even those who refused to endorse the action said later that Reagan had technically met his obligations under the War Powers Act. Besides, as more than one of the Congressmen at the meeting suggested afterwards: 'There's an enormous amount of pent-up frustration around here. We've been pushed around enough.'

Law of the American Empire

IN ANTICIPATION of increasing defiance of American intervention abroad, Republicans in Congress have recently embarked on an attempt to pass new laws to protect US vested interests worldwide.

Although still to be enacted, these bills have succeeded in creating a pseudo-legal framework for the Administration's current military adventurism. The lack of firm opposition in Congress or in the press to the bills has allowed even cautious US officials to believe they have public support for the imposition of US whim by force.

On 19 February the Senate passed a bill making it a crime for anyone anywhere to attack a US person — whatever that person may be doing — or the property of US citizens, however illegally it may have been acquired.

Although the bill was treated with slightly more scepticism by the House of Representatives in early March, it is expected to receive renewed support in the wake of the recent round of violence. The bill, whose prime mover is Senator Arlen Specter, also threatens the might of the armed forces and secret services to seize the alleged offenders if the governments concerned refuse to give up their legal right to prosecute and hand over the 'culprits' for extradition.

The justification given is the need to combat what the Reagan Administration calls the 'international league of terror'. Because US statutes have never distinguished between acts of politically motivated terrorism and criminal violence, US officials have preferred to talk of 'terrorist states'. That includes any country which has challenged the US, directly or indirectly; Syria, Libya, South Yemen, Iran, Cuba, Nicaragua and North Korea are named, with the Soviet Union supposedly manipulating them all.

However, the Judiciary Committee pointed out to the House of Representatives that by ignoring the motivation behind political violence the new doctrine flies in the face of the principles of the US domestic criminal code. It was also worried that the bill would diminish the willingness of countries with whom the US already has working extradition arrangements to co-operate with Washington and would exacerbate rather than soften anti-American sentiments abroad. It could also prompt other countries to exercise similar claims against American diplomats, military personnel and intelligence agents around the world.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee has meanwhile drawn up an omnibus Anti-Terrorism Bill, overwhelmingly passed in the House and expected to have an easy ride in the Senate on 30 April. This applies demands for tightening of airport security to US standards, made law by a 1985 Act, to ports for passenger ships. It also expands sanctions already enacted by Congress to try to halt trade and diplomatic relations between states such as Libya, Iran, South Yemen and Cuba and the rest of the world. If nations don't comply with US demands for security at airports and ports, the President can order a suspension of air and sea passenger links with them; another step towards the US establishing itself as a world police officer. ●

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THE FLEECING OF THE WORLD'S POOR

Guilty partners in the debt crisis are near to hand. Your high street bank is up to its neck in it, writes JOHN DENHAM

GLOSSY ACCOUNTS NOW dropping through shareholders' doors paint a rosy picture for Britain's high street banks. With record pre-tax profits of over £2.5bn between them for 1985, Lloyds, Midland, Barclays and NatWest give only cautionary footnotes to the Third World debt crisis which has shaken the world's banks over the past four years.

Joy at record profits is unlikely to be shared in the developing countries which incurred huge bank loans in the 1970s and early 1980s. Their transfer of wealth to the advanced industrialised countries — over $30bn from Latin America alone last year — is sustaining bank profits whilst slashing the living standards of their poorest citizens. There are few signs that the banks are preparing to relieve the relentless pressure maintained since 1982.

The dependence on Latin American poverty to maintain profits is no accident. In the wake of Mexico's threatened default in 1982, advisory committees of banks were established for each major debtor. The advisors co-ordinate negotiations on behalf of all lending banks; and it is they who have insisted on the adoption of IMF conditions as a pre-requisite for even limited new lending.

'IMF conditions' amount to reducing real wages, removing subsidies on basic foods and utilities, cutting development programmes and introducing inflationary exchange rate and interest policies. They have ensured that living standards of the poor have fallen by as much as half since 1982. UNICEF estimates that up to 150 million Latin Americans now live in 'absolute poverty'.

The advisory committees, which conduct regional consultations with many hundreds of smaller banks, reflect the banks' reluctance to make new funds available (even though they are generally returned immediately as interest payments). If anything, they have made IMF conditions more rather than less restrictive. British banks have been represented on each of the Latin American committees and clearly play an important role in imposing the austerity measures which are usually credited solely to the IMF.

A 'card-house' collapse of banks is still feasible; a sudden default by major debtors could wipe out the capital base of major banks in the US and Britain and embroil many less exposed banks in serious difficulties.

At the end of 1984, the latest year for which a full analysis is available, Lloyds and Midland had lent 257 per cent and 310 per cent respectively of their shareholders' funds and reserves to Latin America alone. The increase in the sterling-dollar exchange rate has reduced these exposures for 1985 by some 20 per cent (most loans were denominated in US dollars) but both are still horrendously over-exposed. The recent plunge in the price of oil has created renewed crisis for the oil-exporting debtors like Mexico and, despite several months of hectic financial and political diplomacy, the possibility of default has not been averted.

BUT WHAT IF there is no serious default in the immediate future? Lloyds is the only British bank which has publicly identified profits from Central and South America (excluding Mexico). Over 40 per cent of Lloyds' international pre-tax profits have come from the poverty-stricken region in the past four years. They have fluctuated wildly from a high of £86m in 1983 to a low of £14m in 1984, rising again to £32m in 1985, but these variations appear to reflect bank allowances for bad debts and changes in exchange rates, rather than variations in payments from the debtor countries. (Profits from Lloyds' Mexican loans should have added a further £10m-£20m a year.)

From the debtors' point of view, profit payments are only a small part of the problem. Total payments on Lloyds' Latin American loans, which include interest payments and repayment of capital in addition to the profit margin, were probably well over £400m in 1985, a figure which looks large when set against Lloyds' pre-tax profits on all activities of £561m.

For the Midland group, the bank most heavily exposed in Latin America, the picture looks worse. Payments on its loans must have been significantly greater than its £351m pre-tax profits. Even Barclays and NatWest, bigger banks with smaller loans to the region, depend on transfers of Latin American wealth for an important part of their income.

Those who are now suffering most to repay the loans got least benefit from them. The number of Latin Americans living in absolute poverty actually rose by 11 million during the hectic years of bank lending between 1974 and 1982.

Despite this record, the banks have fiercely resisted demands, whether from the Cartegena group of Latin American debtor nations or on an individual basis — most recently from Mexico — that they should take part of the burden by reducing effective interest rates on the debt.

The network of leading banks shaped through the advisory committees has played an important role in defining Western responses to the crisis. Towards the end of 1985 both Lloyds and Barclays were involved in the informal bank committee which co-ordinated bank responses to the Baker Plan. Under this initiative, launched by US Treasury Secretary James Baker, new lending to major debtors should come in equal measures from multi-lateral institutions like the World Bank and from the commercial banks.

While the Baker Plan is criticised by the borrowers for failing to provide sufficient funds — less than a third of the interest payments that must be made in the next three years — and for continuing to demand unacceptable economic policies, bank support is heavily qualified. British bank reports earnestly endorse the Plan but make clear their demand that Western governments play a major role in its implementation.

In other words, the public sector is now expected to bear part of the cost of sorting out the mess the banks have got themselves into through reckless lending. It is time the banks were called upon to bear some of the costs of the debt crisis. □

British bank lending to Latin America

The figures below are drawn from annual accounts and other published material and brokers' estimates for the end of 1984

Country	Lloyds	Barclays	NatWest	Midland
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Brazil	1,857	571	700	1,871
Mexico	1,181	1,010	795	1,590
Argentina	556	450	475	757
Venezuela	554	278	250	400
Others	1,133	706	492	681
Total:	**5,281**	**3,015**	**2,172**	**5,300**
% of all lending	17	6.2	6.1	14.1
% of shareholders' funds & reserves	257	116	102	310
Profits (pre-tax): 1984	468	623	671	135
Profits (pre-tax): 1985	561	854	804	351

John Denham is National Campaigns Organiser for War on Want. A campaign around the role of the British banks, Profits out of Poverty, *was launched by WoW Campaigns, War on Want's campaigning associate on 16 April.*

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LETTERS

Cold turkey for Bomb junkies

Bruce Kent, London N1

Peter Kellner pushes his analogy a little too far (*NS* 11 April). Comparisons can be drawn between addiction to drugs and addiction to nuclear weapons. But those hooked in that way in this country are the inner core of undemocratic and often unknown decision makers who have fought for their fixes ever since Attlee first picked up the syringe.

Nevertheless those hooked remain in power because a substantial number of people who support them have been led to believe that nuclear weapons actually provide the security to which they are properly entitled. 75 per cent of our population, for instance, oppose policies which would involve the first use of nuclear weapons but far fewer realise that such *are* the policies of NATO. Fudges like 'No early use' are evasions designed to hide the reality. We have to make endlessly clear that any *use* now of nuclear weapons is wholly irrational unless one belongs to the ever diminishing group which believes that a limited nuclear war is a possibility.

Those hooked know perfectly well, however, that they can help to keep up their flow of fixes if they appeal to the crudest forms of nationalism using the propaganda of Conservative Central Office. Such people have to be asked time and again what any 'independent' British strategic nuclear deterrent is actually *for* even if it were (which it is not) really independent. Polaris and Co. may, granted rationality, deter anyone from using nuclear weapons on us — perfect justification of course for the acquisition of nuclear weapons by any other middle range power. But supposing the Tartar Hordes, so often described for us by the far Right, decide to invade these islands with all those massive conventional forces which we hear about daily, what are we to do with Polaris? To fire it would be a combination of genocide and suicide. The threat it implies is immoral, illegal, irrational and therefore incredible. What is it *for* is the question that the fixers have to be forced to answer.

Peter Kellner seems to be recommending some form of gentle withdrawal. Perhaps with the hard cases the only realistic answer is Cold Turkey.

Half-witted hit list?

Roger Ratcliffe, Sunday Times

Francis Wheen went too far in his review of *Rupert Murdoch: A Paper Prince* (*NS* 11 April). He pointed out, correctly, that many of the journalists who left the *Sunday Times* since it was acquired by Murdoch were the best of their generation but he added a quite monstrous libel hiding behind generalisation: '. . . many of the people who have replaced them are no-hopers and half-wits'.

I have been a reporter on the paper since the days of Harold Evans so I feel qualified to defend the new young generation of journalists now producing many good stories which still make us a better read than our closest rival, the *Observer*.

I should point out that it was Wheen's wife, Joan Smith (a former *Sunday Times* journalist), who last month in the *NS* produced a roll call of those distinguished journalists — 'many of the best of their generation' to quote Wheen — who had left the paper. I challenge Wheen to produce a similar list in the *NS* naming the 'no-hopers and half-wits'. If he declines he should withdraw the statement and apologise.

Hard-hearted Pope

James Leahy, London EC2

It is unfortunate that Martha Gellhorn, in the otherwise admirably sympathetic and powerful piece from *The Face of War* (*NS* 21 March), seemed prepared to accept that accounts published in the Western media of the Pope's visit to Nicaragua were full, comprehensive and fair: 'It was terrible judgement as well as terrible bad manners to permit noisy rudeness to the Pope, the world's most appealing reactionary'.

Media 'appeal' usually depends less upon the personal qualities of the person portrayed than upon those images and facts which the media choose to report about him or her. This is certainly so in this case. A rather fuller account of what happened in Managua on this occasion is to be found in David Bradbury's *Nicaragua: No Pasaran* (available from The Other Cinema in film and video-cassette).

After describing the struggle between the Popular Church and the hierarchy in Nicaragua, the commentary goes on to record: 'Most foreign journalists failed to mention that he (the Pope) had arrived at an extremely emotional moment. The day before the Pope arrived a mass funeral had taken place for 17 high school students, members of the civilian milita. They'd been gunned down in a dawn raid by the contras. Some died in their sleeping bags without firing a shot. They were 15 to 21 years old . . . As devout Catholics, what these weeping mothers and relatives longed for was some word of hope, a message of encouragement from the Pope that finally the killing would stop, and, if that were not possible, then at least a prayer for their dead children'.

A crowd of more than half a million gathered just to see and hear the Pope, waiting all day in blistering heat: 'The crowd listened patiently to the Pope's speech, but after an hour it became clear that he'd make no mention of the deaths of the 17 young soldiers, nor would the Pope make a plea for the peace'. It was then that cries of 'We want peace' started to interrupt his words. One wonders, was it really too much for that congregation to hope that their spiritual leader might offer a prayer for peace, or for the dead? Wouldn't that have been in keeping with the teaching of Christ?

Bradbury's images, however, reveal, apart from the suffering, grieving mothers, a bad-tempered Pope and an uncomfortable and apparently embarrassed Sandinista leadership. Of course, if the latter were the authoritarian totalitarians President Reagan suggests, they would have been able to orchestrate a crowd response more acceptable to the Western media. Even Martha Gellhorn seems to imply such orchestration would have been proper. As it was, ordinary human feelings could not be contained: 'We felt the pain, the pain of the mothers. We thought the Pope would bring a message of peace, or at least a prayer for the mothers of our 17 comrades, who died fighting only days before his visit. But he was deaf to the mothers' pleas. So we as Nicaraguans, we resented that. But still hope that once he is back home he will analyse and correct his mistake'.

Such a hope is, of course, properly devout, but in a world where the Pope's decision in Managua to harden his heart and pass by on the other side seems, if anything, to have enhanced his 'appealing' image, it is probably forlorn.

A late, great artist

Nicholas Dicker, London NW6

You really cannot be allowed to get away with printing such rubbish as Andrew Lumsden's article on the late Sir Peter Pears (*NS* 11 April). An obituary is *de rigeur* a brief biography of the deceased, not an in-depth study. In this context, Pears's well-known homosexuality was not only unnecessary to mention, but wholly irrelevant in weighing up his final artistic achievement and contribution to mankind.

Take me to your Leader
GADAFY v. REAGAN: THE DIPLOMATIC ALTERNATIV
THAT IMPERIALIST TYRANT HAS CROSSED MY LINE OF DEATH WITH HIS AIRCRAFT CARRIERS
BITRATION
THAT RABID MAD DOG IS THE BRAINS BEHIND SQUADS OF MURDEROUS TERRORISTS!
ARBITRA
THAT DUPLICITOUS DUNG-FLY HAS MURDEROUS TERRORIST SQUADS OF HIS OWN IN NICARAGUA!
THE CONTRAS? WHY, THEY ARE SIMPLY PROTECTING FREEDOM IN MY BACK YARD!
ARBITRATION
OK. EASY. JUST SWOP. YOU TAKE THE LINE OF DEATH TO PUT ROUND YOUR BACK YARD...
ARBITR
...AND YOU REPLACE YOUR TERRORISTS WITH FREEDOM-LOVING CONTRAS.
ATION
© JOHN MINNION

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DESIGNED FOR WAR

Marina Warner

Israel has overturned the old image of the Jew. MARINA WARNER travels in search of the new

Spring in Judaea, and the voice of the turtle heard by King Solomon now struggles with the voice of the cement mixer. New suburbs crown the hills on the approach roads to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, and wink in the light like ads for Milton Keynes; in the Old City, the restored Jewish quarter sparkles, its alleys spick and span, its apartments all of a piece with the planted piazzas and carefully restored excavations, as if delivered pristine from the gold-rose local stone; in the West Bank the settlements patch the landscape like new render in an old wall.

And more building is promised: in former No Man's Land, by the road to the Jaffa gate of the Old City, the shops and houses have been excavated. In the shrapnel-pocked ruins, a smith is hammering his anvil, while a horseman — a Bedouin? — stands by waiting for the shoe. Our guides says cheerfully, 'When you come next time, all this will be gone, hopefully.' The cement mixers will have started to give voice here too.

The road to Ma'ale Adummim, a new, densely-populated settlement and one of the nearest to Jerusalem on the West Bank, opened recently. A handsome, patent-bright tarmac highway, it sweeps through the big lolloping Biblical dunes of the Judaean desert and gives a fine view of the white, balconied houses and apartments, stacked like holiday-let flats in a prime resort, the very picture of a travel agent's invitation to a new development in the Riviera, or Marbella, or near Saint Tropez. Except that solar panels, arranged in battalions on the roofs, add a pioneering touch, and give a clue to the inhabitants' more urgent need of resources and supplies; except that, when you have surveyed a bit more of the terrain and seen other settlements capping the hills at strategic vantage points, and taken in the tightness of the ground plans, the solidity of the masonry, the close setting of the windows in their stone frames, like the doors of heavy duty laundromats, and even in some cases, the defensive arrangement of the front doors, which do not open directly onto the street, then even Marbella-on-Jordan looks like a citadel.

Above: From one angle it looks likeMarbella-on-Jordan. The defensive arrangements give it away

Herod the Great — the Tetrarch of Jesus's time — possesses a kind of exemplary status in contemporary Israeli myth because though he had to struggle against Roman oppression, he was a man of big dreams and energetic ambition, and his reign saw the completion of the Second Temple. Herodian masonry, embedded in the Old City walls and the foundations of the Temple Mount, in the fortress palace of legendary Masada, and even in the pleasure dome of Herodion, a massive man-made cone rising in the desert, heralds the monumental style of the settlements' vernacular architecture. The Crusaders too, when they came to the Holy Land, hewed their fortresses out of the limestone and basalt, leaving titanic ramparts and plunging moats as testimony to their attempts to settle Outremer.

But drawing a parallel between Crusader enterprise in present day Israel provokes furious rebuttals: Arab polemicists are fond of the analogy. Besides, crusaders figure justifiably high in the country's

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demonology, for their bigotry and ruthlessness and the pogroms they conducted against Jews. On the heights of the twelfth-century castle of Belvoir in Galilee, overlooking the green valley of the Jordan, one of our group sadly forswore his boyhood love of chivalry, of knights and damozels and palfreys and castles as our guide recalled some grim aspects of the Crusaders' prowess.

The stone-clad architecture of post-1967 Israel harks back to an earlier age than the Crusaders' and Herod's: the excavation of the rock to build anew serves to recall the Biblical title to the land, just as archaeological discoveries map with ever-increasing detail the connections between history and geography.

By going down into the bedrock, Israeli architecture roots itself in the land, hews the present out of the past, gives fresh value to the word 'aboriginal'. The tombs on the Mount of Olives, where the dead await their swift resurrection through the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, are decorated by the mourners with small stones, as if a volcano had erupted and scattered a storm of magma over the calm grey steles of the sloping necropolis. The custom is ancient, we were told. 'Every Jew does it, and no Jew knows why,' our guide said, laughing, and then added that the custom probably arose because shepherds counted their flocks with stones, and so the stones now symbolised the prayers of the living that their dead should be reckoned among the blessed.

The Jews aren't of course alone, in this riven part of the world, in claiming the very bones of the land: the great golden dome of the larger Mosque 'of Omar' in the Haram or Temple Mount enshrines a slab of mountain, from which Mohammed rose to heaven, leaving a footprint on the rock; in the delicate Romanesque chapel of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives, another piece of rock is also engraved with a footprint — in this case, Christ's.

The international style of architecture, typified by Oscar Niemeyer's soaring simple shaft of glass and steel for Haifa University on Mount Carmel no longer enjoys the enthusiasm of some locals. The present embattled climate requires more particular, rooted imagery from its buildings. REMEMBER says a huge sign in the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv. 'For us,' says a Rabbi, 'the past is in the present tense.' Archaism in construction meets this need. But those dissident Jews who disagree with current policy in the West Bank have dubbed the new architecture 'Pharaonic', an insult that tells on a people for whom the slavery in Egypt represents a first chapter in oppression.

The massive, low-lying, fortress-like character of national shrines, like Yad Vashem's Hall of Remembrance for the Holocaust, or the Shrine of the Book, is often set off by monumental sculpture, some of it expressionist and figurative, recalling the anguished protests of Käthe Kollwitz's graphic works of the early part of the century, some of it abstract, school of Caro and Philip King. On the sites of battles, in the approaches to Jerusalem, on the Golan Heights, and in the Judaean desert, monuments to the fallen raise jagged metal angles to the sky. The memorial to the Holocaust shows emaciated bodies of victims strung out as if hanging on barbed wire; in the Hall of Remembrance itself, over the ashes of some of the dead, by the inlaid names of the concentration and extermination camps, a frozen fire of dark spiky metal holds the eternal flame.

The figure of Israel in many of the prophetic books of the Bible used to be female, the bride of God, beloved but faithless, flowering and fertile; that tradition of imagery cannot serve the present, it seems, and in their search for a visual language for our times, Israeli sculptors have chosen imagery of struggle and defiance that reads as masculine, heroic, striving and lonely. When I was struggling with a term to characterise it, a friend, a philosopher at Hebrew University, supplied one: 'Mutilated Macho', he said.

Just past the metal arc of Ma'ale Adummim's public monument, among the bright Herodian masonry of its outer houses, a bio-chemist who taught in Jerusalem was sitting, smoking in the sun, with her year old boy, called Omri after one of the kings of Israel. She told me, 'The road used to go through two Arab villages. I got on with them, I used to get my fruit and vegetables there. Sometimes they threw stones, sometimes they didn't, that was life. But friends didn't like it, they wanted us to come and see them, in Jerusalem, not come out here themselves. So the new road was built, and now we don't go through the villages any more.'

She shrugged. Her disaffection was not bitter, but light and sympathetic. She had come to live in the settlement because a home for a family of five like hers costs half the price of a similar house in the city; she paid no attention to the religious elements in the settlement, and they left her alone too. But there were going to be elections soon, ten parties were competing, it was the first time in the ten year old town, and the Likud (the right-wing religious party) would win.

An Arab ragpicker came by, calling out by his tinker's van. At the rear, a few scraps of old iron were hanging out. The only word I could pick out was 'television' — was he asking for old sets or just for clapped out aerials? The labour that builds the settlements, that churns the sand of the desert in the mixers is drawn from the straggling villages around, just as the fruit and vegetables grown on the West Bank are picked by locals, whom the settlers employ. In the Hebrew press, the more patriotic voices deplore the contending principles of nationalism and capitalism, the exchange of funds, even at this level, between Arab and Jew in the market, and the loss of income tax to Israel.

The greening of the Jordan valley and the husbandry of the country provoke widespread pride. As Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz explained, 'The Israeli has reversed the image of the Jews. Jews were supposed to be no good at being soldiers or agriculturists. From Poland to Turkey, the saying went, "Where a Jew steps, no grass will grow." Finance, and diplomacy were the Jewish talents. Well, if you look at the State of Israel now . . .' He bites his pipe with a pixie-ish grin. 'As to finance — we are in a mess. As for diplomacy . . .'

In Jericho, our guide stopped by a cascade of deep purple bougainvillea and let us out of the car into the sunshine and the scent of orange blossom, a perfume so amorous that a Karl Lagerfeld would kill to trap it in a half-ounce bottle, and yet somehow innocent withal. We stood like the beasts at Orpheus's music, until our guide directed our attention to a fenced garden by the road, where loquat trees and oranges, lemons and mangoes flowered and fruited wildly, untended, ungathered, unhusbanded. Sternly she told us that the owner of the land — a Greek whose name she marked — would not pay the proper wages Israel now set on the West Bank, and had rather let this Eden fall to rack and ruin.

Later, in Ramallah further North, a Jewish-American volunteer worker, making a study of trade union practice and law in the West Bank, described a labour situation that recalled for me the migrant workers of the Californian grape harvests, with no Cesar Chavez emerging to help them. In Israel, as perhaps in any country in conflict, pieces of information are counters in a game and the novice, like me, must fumble along without access to the rulebook.

Law in the Service of Man, an agency affiliated to the International Committee of Jurists is based in Ramallah; it is dedicated to trying to understand the law under which the non-Jewish community of the West Bank is living. Remnants of British Mandate legislation, Jordanian law, Israeli military law, Israeli national law jostle for authority and are applied in a bewildering variety of procedures and courts. In recognition of this confusion, our guide thankfully took off her seat belt when driving in the West Bank.

The chief victims are of course Palestinians, who can be detained without charges and without trial for a period up to six months, then subject to review and renewal. The proceedings are held in camera, and the evidence is not always

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Raissa Page/Format

He evokes the traditional image — but is now clearly on the edge of Israel's society

revealed to the defendant or his counsel. Amnesty has 58 cases on its lists at the time of writing, including Muhammad 'Abdallah Amiri, a journalist.

Raja Shehadeh, one of the lawyers who founded Law in the Service of Man, and author of *The Third Way*, about growing up in Palestine under Jordanian and Israeli rule, made me tongue-tied with ignorance and confusion at the infinite difficulties of a situation into which I was breezily stepping, as if into a swimming pool for a pleasant dip, but with which he, and 700,000 Arabs in the West Bank, the Arabs in Israel as well as the $3\frac{1}{2}$ million Jews were living.

'You can tell quite quickly if a country is rotten,' says one of our group. 'And this place isn't. It doesn't have that smell about it.' Looks of anguish pass across the faces of Israelis, of Holocaust survivors imprecating against the religious conservatives, of Sabras born there, Ashkenazy and Sephardi alike, of activists in the Peace Now Movement, of writers establishing bridgeheads with their fellows in Egypt now that the border is open. The interviewer from Israeli radio implores, 'What do you think of Israel? Why does Israel get such a bad press abroad?' 'We are trying to make hot ice' says the Rabbi. 'Why should we always expect Israel to behave better than everybody else?' 'Until a people learns to internalise its own sufferings and not inflict them on others it cannot change!' 'The human rights situation in Israel is better than in any of the surrounding countries in the Middle East.' 'What would you do if all your neighbours wanted to push you into the sea and kept on saying so, loud and clear?' 'Remember, there is an element of revenge too.' The voices rise and clash and overlap, as you lie in your bed thinking of the day's experiences, like the tuning knob passing through the bands on a short wave radio.

In Israel, as with a Rubik cube, you can have the squares lined up, and then find, with a single twist, that the pattern has flown apart once again. But unlike a Rubik cube each part strains against another. The geographical divisions are comparatively easy to grasp: the Old City is quartered, the Temple Mount is off bounds to observant Jews, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre demarcates Syrian from Copt, Protestant from Greek Orthodox and Armenian from Catholic, while the Ethiopians are kept on the roof.

But you can trespass across borders without knowing it, you can blunder across the invisible lines, as our group did when we asked the novelist Avram Yehoshua, a teacher of Hebrew literature at Haifa University, what he thought of Jewish-American literature like the fiction of Saul Bellow and Philip Roth. He repudiated any kinship they might have with Israeli literature, and went on to reject the corpus of Diaspora learning as no relation. (This position differs from the more familiar approach, exemplified by the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv, where Einstein, Freud, et al. represent the achievement of the Jews abroad.)

I told him of an analogy I had heard drawn in Jerusalem, between Israel today and America during the Civil War. 'The Americans fought the civil war for the Union,' I recounted,' And one of its results was the emancipation of the slaves. But that wasn't their first aim. If necessary, I've been told', — as I hurtled on, I realised how clumsy I was being, but I was too far in to go back — 'the secular, democratic anti-Zionists will fight a civil war against the religious zealots who want to establish a theocracy in Israel. And the freedom of the Palestinians will be a side effect, an outcome, but not their main aim.'

In the hotel coffee shop where I had first heard this ringing pledge — this terrifying prophecy — the entire assembled company of lovers and businessmen lunching out stopped talking and froze, and the hush hung on the room long after we began discussing something else. It is a sign of Israel's democratic strength that such opinions can be so loudly and so openly spoken in public.

But on the West Bank, Raja Shehadeh listened thoughtfully to the comparison, then said with a touch of iron in his humorous voice, 'I do not think that Israel can be compared to the Union.' And left the rest unsaid.

Gait, hats, costume, haircut inscribe allegiances on the individual body and draw up more borders. The Orthodox women of Méa She'arim cover their heads with kerchiefs over the wigs that conceal their cropped hair. It's difficult for the visitor to distinguish them from Orthodox Muslim women in their modest apparel, until you learn that the Arabs like high-heeled shoes. Hassidic men wear velvet Borsalinos, the less Observant their skullcaps, which are issued in cardboard to male tourists in sacred places; Greek Orthodox monks flutter by in Bethlehem in a swirl of black drapery, with pony tails bouncing on their nape.

The most dominant and visible uniform belongs of course to the army, since all males up to the age of 55 serve in the reserves, for up to a month a year, and all women, though more easily exempt, until the age of 34. Girl soldiers in green fatigues stand by the Western Wall under the Al-aqsa mosque and, grasping the Book in one hand and an automatic weapon in the other, pledge themselves to fight for their country. The army acts as a great unifier; in some real sense, the wearing of trousers symbolises the mainstream of Israeli society, and the wearers of burnouses, surplices, gowns and frock-coats, however 'Orthodox' they claim to be, stand at the periphery.

But an army necessarily provides only limited unity; the common ground grows narrower, the plurality of voices greater. Stories of reconciliation enter the folklore and are treasured. On one occasion before 1967, a nun from the big convent overlooking the Old City in West Jerusalem, dropped her false teeth from a window into No Man's Land. A Jordanian, an Israeli and a UN soldier crossed their borders and retrieved the dentures of a Christian nun. But such stories are rare birds, off course on a migration elsewhere. □

Marina Warner was one of a group of writers — the others were Melvyn Bragg, Julian Barnes, Hermione Lee and Martin Amis — invited to Israel by Friends of Israel.

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Clifford Harper

Good without God

Nicolas Walter

The Religion of Humanity
T. R. WRIGHT *Cambridge* £27.50
The British Ethical Societies
IAN MACKILLOP *Cambridge* £25

THE MOVEMENT from one system of belief to another is seldom a simple process for either societies or individuals. In our own society during the past couple of centuries, for example, as we have gradually passed from orthodox Christianity towards various forms of unorthodox Christianity or other religious and non-religious beliefs, some people have lost their faith and some have never had any, but most people have moved only a short distance at a time and have paused at various stages of faith along the way.

Whereas previous schisms and heresies had only limited effects, the Protestant Reformation began a continuing process; the new orthodoxies — Lutheranism, Calvinism, Zwinglianism, Anglicanism — were soon accompanied by new unorthodoxies — Anabaptism, Quakerism, Unitarianism, Universalism — and then more radical unorthodoxies — Theism, Deism, Secularism, Agnosticism — which broke away from the Judaeo-Christian tradition altogether. Here is a pair of academic books on two such unorthodoxies which were imported into this country during the 19th century and proved unstable and transitory but remain significant and interesting.

The Religion of Humanity is a straightforward study of Positivism, an ideology which originated in France during the early 19th century but had its greatest effect in Britain. The book begins with a summary of the extraordinary life and thought of Auguste Comte, who invented sociology and expounded a schematic division of all human activity into theological, metaphysical and positive periods, a utopian dictatorship of the technocrats, a social morality of altruism, a concept of subjective immortality and a Religion of Humanity with a non-theistic Catholic doctrine and ritual, a new era and calendar, and a list of secular saints. The rest of the book gives a survey of Comte's immediate impact in Britain from the 1820s and then of his subsequent influence here right down to the 1950s.

The most intriguing sections are those on the orthodox Positivists — Richard Congreve, Comte's chosen representative in this country, who adopted the Religion of Humanity and from the 1850s developed a Positivist church in London which lasted until 1932; Frederic Harrison, J. H. Bridges and E. S. Beesly, Congreve's leading pupils, colleagues and then rivals, who broke with him in the 1870s, started another Positivist church in London which lasted until 1902 and established a society and a periodical which lasted much longer; and the associates and followers of both factions in London and elsewhere, especially in Leicester, Newcastle upon Tyne and above all Liverpool, where a Positivist church lasted until 1947.

But the Positivist religion was too obviously vulnerable to ridicule, and more important are the sections on the many prominent people who were impressed by Comte in various ways and to varying degrees for more than a century — Mill, Lewes, Harriet Martineau, Holyoake, Morley, Stephen, Lecky, Bury, Pater, George Eliot, Meredith, Hardy, Gissing, Olive Schreiner, Beatrice Webb, Hobhouse, Patrick Geddes, Gilbert Murray and so on. What may be called the most positive elements of Positivism were expressed in their work rather than in the Positivist churches or societies. Positivism disappeared, but acquired its own subjective immortality by being dissolved into the spirit of the age.

The British Ethical Societies is a more discursive study of Ethicism, a similar ideology which originated in the United States during the late 19th century and had a considerable effect in Britain. The beginning of the book is rather confused, but so was the beginning of the British Ethical movement. What was called Ethical Culture was founded by progressive American Jews and Christians during the 1870s as a movement to promote a positive morality based on practice rather than religion, the influence being Kant rather than Comte. The movement is still flourishing in the United States today.

Ethicism was brought to this country by Stanton Coit in 1886. He began by stimulating the formation of a London Ethical Society by a group of Idealist philosophers, including Muirhead and Bosanquet, and then took over an existing organisation, the South Place Religious Society in Finsbury. This had begun as a Dissenting chapel in 1793 and was in turn Baptist, Universalist and Unitarian, before being run for 20 years by another American, Moncure Conway, who led it through Theism and Agnosticism almost to Secularism and Humanism. The unifying element at South Place was freedom of inquiry and its pursuit of this principle made it a symbol of the progress of Dissent through Protestantism and beyond. Coit lasted only a couple of years at South Place, but it remained an Ethical Society, replacing its Minister with Appointed Lecturers, moving to Holborn in 1929 and pursuing its principle to the logical conclusion of shedding all the trappings of religion. It survives today as part of the broader Humanist movement.

Meanwhile the London Ethical Society stimulated the formation of other societies, became the London School of Ethical and Social Philosophy, narrowly failed to become part of London University and dissolved in 1900. Coit himself helped to found several other societies, drawing them into a Union of Ethical Societies in 1896, and started a periodical to serve the growing movement. In 1909 he acquired an old Methodist church and turned it into the Ethical church as a centre for

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non-theistic ritual which was, as it were, the Anglican equivalent of the non-theistic Catholicism of the Positivist churches. The Ethical movement reached its peak just before the First World War but then went into a long decline. In 1953 Coit's successor, Harold Blackham, sold the church and bought a building which became the headquarters of the surviving Ethical Union. Under his influence the Ethical movement — and most other freethought organisations in Britain — accepted the ideology of Humanism and during the 1960s the Ethical Union became the British Humanist Association. It survives today as the main organisation in the wider Humanist movement.

Terence Wright writes clearly and carefully, though his coverage of a once very broad phenomenon is rather narrow; it would be interesting to learn more about Positivism in politics — many leaders were active socialists — and about its relationship with non-Comtist positivism. His book has some nice illustrations. Ian MacKillop writes more vaguely about a more elusive phenomenon, and his treatment of sources is sometimes rather careless; his version of events I know about is far from reliable. His book has no illustrations. Both books are fascinating memorials of their subjects and are well worth reading.

Positivism has disappeared physically as well as philosophically, though a few of its buildings may still be found — the Church of Humanity in Holborn survives as a commercial warehouse and the Temple of Humanity in Liverpool as a Christian Scientist church. Ethicism has been absorbed into Humanism and its buildings are symbolically easier to find — the Ethical church in Bayswater survives as a Catholic church, the British Humanist Association survives in Kensington, and the South Place Ethical Society at Conway Hall. But the most profound contribution of both Positivism and Ethicism was to education, especially self-education; their meetings and periodicals over a century provided a liberal education as good as could be found in any other institution, and their permanent effect was entirely good. It is easy to laugh at both movements, but it would be wiser to learn from them. □

PAPERBACKS

Hyperbole

Alan Brien

'900 PAGES OF TYPING that are less trouble to read than a road-sign . . .' This epitome of most recent best-selling novels is flip enough to have come from Martin Amis's serial cartoon, that rake's regress towards the most evil of all roots, **Money** (Penguin, £2.95). Instead, it is hidden away in one of the less celebrated short stories bound together in that rather severe classic, **Memoirs of Hecate County** (Hogarth, £3.95), published almost half a century ago.

I have already mentioned Edmund Wilson's paperback here. But I must admit that I had not then re-read those shorter, less ambitious, more apparently ephemeral, because more dated and awkwardly involved, sections, such as 'The Mulhollands and their Damned Souls' or 'Glimpses of Wilbur Flick'. Yet, amazingly, these sour, grudging, barely fictionalised observations of what we had not then learned to call 'the media' provide a penetrating, prophetic satire of the 20th-century's own Muse (*Hyperbole* the Goddess of Salespersonship, symbol a bent ear and a fat purse) rarely since equalled.

That 900-page block-buster, as Wilson's scarcely-altered alter-ego discovers, need no longer be written by a single typist. Here, the official processor of the words, trained in another growth industry (also early spotted by Wilson) personalised weather forecasting, contributes the text's natural disasters — floods, hurricanes, earthquakes. The plot is computer-planned, even before the invention of computers — 'five generations of marvellous women with every other generation a Cinderella'. Each period heroine part of a matched pair — why? Why, to allow one from the North, one from the South, of course.

This is the least important part of the operation — the writing, a tedious, traditional routine. Next is the really professional bit —

> . . . the biggest promotion campaign that's ever been seen in this country. They're taking double-spreads in the papers and claiming an advance sale of 300,000 copies. Of course, it's a complete fake — that many copies haven't even been printed. They sell them on paper to their own warehouses. There's no actual demand for the book, but even if it gets bad reviews, it won't make a bit of difference: they'll put it over as a big best-seller, whether anybody wants to read it or not. That's what the publishing business has gotten to be — then a cheap edition in paper that will sell a couple of millions!

Wilson's prose is hardly appetising, indeed rather dry and constipated, hardening to a semi-scientific precision. He must have been one of the first modern novelists to specialise in illuminating intimate feelings by analogies with chemistry, sociology, physics and mathematics. Even when he bores, you feel it is in the interests of accuracy. Amis's language encloses you well over your head, a gargantuan trifle, a queen of puddings as high as the Himalayas. You must dig yourself out within the next four pages or suffocate. Indeed, every fifth helping is too rich to be edible or readable.

I once wrote an essay in these pages listing those propositions in which 'money' and 'sex' were interchangeable — I think I got to 33. Amis suggests a total amalgamation. Yet, though he gives us wonderful descriptions of both, he never really tells us anything we didn't suspect. His characters would need to be extended in several dimensions even to be called Jonsonian or Hogarthian — for example, a narrator who not only thinks *Animal Farm* is a children's Rupert-Bear-style bedtime story but in 1982 has not heard of *1984*. There is an illusion of narrative which never made me concerned about what happens next, and the final explanation of the constant come-on — how can our hero afford to buy whatever he wants? — turns out to be in almost every sense childish.

AT LAST, it would appear, the American thriller is finally starting to emerge on this side of the Atlantic from under the rather prissy, tasteful sun-shade of Raymond Chandler, probably the most over-praised popular entertainer in the field after Ian Fleming. Was there ever a who-dunnit of his not female? What definition of a novelist survives the discovery from Chandler's early short stories that he could hoard scraps of dialogue regardless of speaker, later transferring lines spoken by an illiterate male wrestler to a smart, young heiress? He never became truly kippered by the climate he lived in, retaining always something of the pale sensitivity of an English public-schoolboy in exile.

I would swap him any day for a blatant crowd-pleaser like John D. MacDonald — try **Travis McGee: Three Complete Novels** (Robinson, £3.50) — who writes with the frothy exuberance of the high-octane adman turned radical advocate but whose slightly ludicrous hero nevertheless charges real social evils head on. In the past, I have also recommended frustrated Chandler-addicts to switch on to such as Cornell Woolrich (*Phantom Lady*, *Rear Window*) or David Goodis (*Nightfall*, *Dark Passage*), classics of

Accidents

Fleur Adcock

The accidents are never happening:
they are too imaginable to be true.
The driver knows his car is still on the road,
heading for Durham in the rain.
The mother knows her baby is just asleep,
curled up with his cuddly blanket, waiting
to be lifted and fed: there's no such thing as cot-death.
The rescue party digging all night in the dunes
can't believe the tunnel has really collapsed:
the children have somehow gone to their Auntie's house;
she has lent them their cousins' pyjamas, they are sitting
giggling together in the big spare room,
pretending to try and spill each other's cocoa.

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film noir, available on the page from Black Box.

Urban paranoia used to be the name of the game, something that Brits could regard as an alien titillation, like race riots and drug muggings. It is interesting to be reminded that there is also a tradition in the US, not yet completely domesticated here, of rural corruption, extortion, torture and tyranny, exercised by both the authorities and the underworld, when they can be differentiated.

George V. (*The Friends of Eddie Coyle*) Higgins probably needs little pushing into the limelight. His latest in paperback, ten years old in hardcover, is **The Judgment of Deke Hunter** (Robinson, £3.95). I have to say that, whatever his admirers urge, a stylist he aint. Nobody who cares about words would set down on page 9 the plonking sentence — 'With packing left to do, Andrea Hunter left the porch around ten-thirty on the evening of September 2, 1973, leaving her father and husband on the porch.' Even Fowler, with his warnings against elegant variation, would find here a writer too clumsily over-treading his own tracks. And this is no exception. Sometimes I found that following Corporal Deke Hunter of the State Troopers through some-such report of a trial as 'Counsel said the witness said that the accused said, Deke said', I wanted to hurl the book into 1986's substitute for the blazing fire, the TV set.

Nevertheless, out in the sticks justice is seen to be done only when it is not being done. It is a world rarely seen in Hollywood, almost never in straight novels, that can only be compared with 19th-century Russia.

Higgins, though a best-seller, pulls no dagger thrusts. This is the way it is, he says. At best, policemen, lawyers, judges, husbands and wives, lovers and lovers, kids and parents, think of themselves first, and only then (if they are good guys) anyone else. This charge-sheet recital of reality can be almost numbing. For example, one of the accused in the case which takes up most of *The Judgment of Deke Hunter* has his prison career off-handedly summed up after he was sentenced to 20 years at the age of 17 —

> During his first three weeks at Charlestown State Prison, Andy Marr was buggered twenty times, and forced to commit sodomy sixteen times. He was compelled to submit to fellatio eleven times. Finding Teddy Donnelly the least brutal of those who used him, and the best equipped to protect him, he became Donnelly's doll, which saved him from further beatings . . . He grew to like Teddy Donnelly, who was satisfied with blow jobs and did not cause Andy any rectal pain.

And this is holiday reading?

Yet we have to respect authors who insist that pain and punishment be represented as they see it. And James Ross's **They Don't Dance Much** (Harrap, £5.95) proves that this genre has not just been developed to suit calloused, over-exposed modern tastes. His carefully written, convincingly plotted, totally believable story of Depression conspiracy, with its almost Russian overtones, was written in 1940. Though the externals appear to have been transformed, the internals seem to have hardly altered at all. □

FICTION

Wide-angle lens

Sheila MacLeod

If Not Now, When?
PRIMO LEVI *Michael Joseph* £10.95
The Fisher King
ANTHONY POWELL *Heinemann* £9.95
The Lord
SORAYA ANTONIUS *Hamish Hamilton* £9.95
Miss Abigail's Part
JUDITH TERRY *Cape* £9.95

IT IS JULY 1943. Mendel the Jewish watchmender from Strelka is on the run from the Nazis who have destroyed his village and murdered his wife. Somewhere in the sparsely-populated forests of Central Europe he meets Leonid, also Jewish and on the run, but from Moscow 'and a lot of other places'. They team up and soon discover that there are others of their kind, not only stragglers like themselves, but organised bands of partisans whose aim is to make their way, by means of sabotage and whatever other form of resistance they can muster, to Italy and then on to Palestine.

If Not Now, When? (the title refers to seizing the opportunity for freedom) tells a formidable story, which is essentially heroic, but makes none of the conventional claims for heroism. True, there are some epic figures, like Gedaleh, the charismatic violin-playing leader of the partisans, but most are ordinary men and women who have spent their lives as (at least) second-class citizens and whose courage is based in endurance and ingenuity rather than the grand gesture or the definitive triumph.

Some are killed, die or disappear in the course of the journey through the mountains, plains and marshes of occupied territory. Those who survive do so by luck as well as caution and through congenital robustness as much as through cunning. The novel ends in Milan with the birth of a son to one of the survivors. A sign of hope? Maybe. The date is Tuesday 7 August 1945 and the news is of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

There is a sense of vastness to this novel — and not only because of the physical terrain it covers — which seems very much a European rather than a English characteristic. Primo Levi is himself a survivor of Auschwitz, and his ability to juxtapose such horrors with humble, everyday acts of altruism is startling, the cumulative effect moving indeed. The tone, which never falters, is deceptively gentle with an edge of ironic humour. In the circumstances, it is a peculiarly dispassionate novel, full of humane understanding and quietly brilliant.

You can't get much more English than Anthony Powell. **The Fisher King**, his first full-length novel since the completion of *A Dance to the Music of Time*, purports to be a gloss on the same Arthurian legend as underpinned *The Waste Land*. It is set on a cruise to Orkney and peopled by a bunch of characters whose genesis owes more to literature than to life. Valentine Beals, an historical novelist, sees his fellow-passenger and famous photographer Saul Henchman as the fisher king and his beautiful ex-dancer companion Barberina Rookwood as some sort of life-force. Apart from Henchman's war-wound, there is not much evidence for such an assumption, as Beals's cronies are all too keen to point out. But he continues with his fantasy, slotting other members of the party into appropriate roles, such as Perceval or the Loathly Damsel, as the action unfolds.

Up to a point this is all quite fun, especially if you are of a literary and/or academic turn of mind. But nothing really happens. Or rather, all sorts of amorous intrigues are going on, but at such a distance from the reader that it is difficult to feel much interest and impossible to feel any involvement in them. Of more interest to Powell (it seems) are the voyeuristic and rather bitchy speculations made by the bystanders about those whom they consider to be the main actors in the drama. We are told something of the thoughts and feelings of the former group, nothing of the latter's. This device may well have been intended as a teasing comment on the elusiveness of the truth of any situation, but the result is curiously lifeless and, for all Powell's wit, erudition and skill, as diagrammatic as an Agatha Christie.

POWELL'S gossiping bystanders could well be the descendants of the British in Soraya Antonius's **The Lord**, which is set in pre-World War II Palestine and where those in authority behave for the most part with insouciant callousness.

Miss Alice, at her missionary school in Jaffa, is an exception and earns the respect of her pupils, among them Tareq who is later hailed by the people as a healer of supernatural powers. Tareq is a harmless enough illusionist, but Challis, the bullying police chief, hunts him down and has him executed for subversive activities. His motives are shabby and his methods bungling, his final act of insensitivity being to arrange the execution for a religious holiday. There is some ambiguity as to Tareq's actual powers and the aim of the novel seems to be to fling the Christ-story back at the Christians. It is written as if through gritted teeth in a tone of suppressed fury which makes it hard going. But the result is bitterly powerful.

In theory the idea behind **Miss Abigail's Part** is a good one: a below-stairs commentary on the comings and goings upstairs at Mansfield Park. But it is also a dangerous enterprise. This is no gloss but a crass attempt to shove sex and politics into Jane Austen — as if they weren't there already. With the wisdom of hindsight Judith Terry has her serving-maid heroine hob-nob with the gentry and read them moral lectures on agrarian reform or the general beastliness of their class. There is a wealth of period detail as to food, clothes, furniture, etc., but no real historical grasp of how people actually spoke, let alone thought or felt. There are those who like this sort of thing, but those who don't should be warned. □

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Shorter reviews

Agate
JAMES HARDING *Methuen* £12.95

James Agate (1877-1947) is best known as the drama critic who preceded Harold Hobson at the *Sunday Times*. He is less famous for having, at the age of seven, bowled out W. G. Grace for a duck. Consistently more interesting on such side-events than on the high profile of Agate's public career, this shapely biography is the perfect tribute to an unconventional life.

In addition to this main role, Agate became at various times a cotton merchant, a captain in the Army Service Corps, the neglectful husband of a Frenchwoman, a book reviewer for the *Daily Express* and a Lambeth tobacconist. He had the double distinction of being blackmailed by Beverly Nichols and picked up in a Turkish bath by Hugh Walpole. Only by the narrowest of margins did he avoid the constant dangers of being arrested or sacked. His friends were mostly actors or rent boys.

James Harding has all the acquisitiveness and indiscretion of a distinguished gossip, but he sugars his spice with the unusual virtues of brevity and grace. At times he is as eccentric as his subject. For instance, he seems to believe that a 'normal life' consists of 'breakfast, shave, newspapers, snooze over books, lunch, tea, supper and bed'. And the book is evidently written for the kind of readers who need a footnote to explain what spam is. In the end, the sheer snottiness of Harding's tone becomes tiresome.

The book's most lasting image is of the corpulent critic basking in a brothel while a moonlighting brute masturbates him between malodorous feet. The impression is of a man detached from the reality in which he was, nonetheless, fully involved. If Agate had only understood that the Second World War and events like it really *were* more important than his diary, he might have been a better diarist. As it is, all we are left with is a string of hilarious but ephemeral anecdotes.

In an age when so many people die alone and forgotten, the manner of Agate's death strikes me as heartwarming. Not every man on his deathbed has the good fortune to be robbed of his gold watch by a grieving ex-boyfriend.

Gregory Woods

Indonesia's Secret War
ROBIN OSBORNE *Allen & Unwin* £6.95

Never has a national liberation struggle been so ignored by the Left, so unreported by the world's media and so betrayed by the international community. Robin Osborne at last breaks the silence surrounding the forgotten war in West Papua which has claimed over 120,000 lives.

He retells the story of how, in the 1960s with United Nations collusion, the former Dutch colony of West New Guinea was handed over to Indonesia against the wishes of the indigenous Melanesian people. Since then, in the jungles of what the Indonesians now call Irian Jaya, the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Movement) has proclaimed the Republic of West Papua, set up a Provisional Revolutionary Government and is now fighting a fierce guerrilla war to win independence from Jakarta. From their mountain hideouts, a small cadre of OPM leaders command over 20,000 village-based guerrillas. Though poorly armed, their

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ambush tactics have inflicted heavy losses on the 10,000-strong Indonesian army of occupation.

As Osborne amply illustrates, the Indonesians have responded with savage and indiscriminate reprisals such as the notorious massacre at Merauke where 122 suspected OPM sympathisers were bound, tied inside weighted copra sacks and dumped in the sea to drown.

Similar Indonesian terror tactics recently provoked 10,000 West Papuans to flee across the border into Papua New Guinea. According to one refugee:

> My people and I fled from our ancestral home because of increased Indonesian military presence and their brutal process of colonisation that threatened to wipe out our cultural identity as a Melanesian people. The hard times began in 1977 . . . with the brutal killing of one of our teachers. Many people fled into the bush. Some were caught, harassed and killed. Others heard reports of their villages being destroyed, along with food gardens. There were always stories about the Javanese transmigrants; church desecrations, shootings and disappearances.

Written in an easy-to-follow journalistic style, *Indonesia's Secret War* is a damning exposure of Jakarta's plans for the cultural extermination of the West Papuan people. It ought to provoke an international outcry.

Peter Tatchell

The Pact: My Friendship with Isak Dinesen
THORKILD BJORNVIG *Souvenir* £8.95

First Karen Blixen is soft-focused by the film *Out of Africa*; then revealed as a syphilitic and jealous harridan, a bloodsucking vampire with the power to seduce and destroy, by her once-beloved friend Thorkild Bjornvig in *The Pact*. Yet Blixen seems to keep her distance from these portraits.

Thorkild Bjornvig has been described as Blixen's third great love. She met him when she was 64 and suffering from tertiary syphilis. The 32-year-old poet fell under her spell and agreed to 'the pact' that Blixen proposed to forsake everything for art and a metaphysical abstraction from things physical and fleshly. For six years Bjornvig allows himself to be ruled — at first with a turgid and fervent adolescent obsequiousness; later with a self-righteous but understandable resentment. He accepts posts abroad that he does not want, is relentlessly pulled away from wife, child and home, masochistically humiliates himself at Blixen's exotic whim and finally ritualistically breaks the bonds of friendship. At times *The Pact* makes embarrassing reading, for Bjornvig, with little sense of the ridiculous, casts Blixen and himself into the roles of Jesus and Martha, Elijah and Elisha, God and prophet.

It is impossible not to wonder why a grown man participated in such a *folie à deux*. Blixen herself suggests one reason, which simultaneously becomes an encapsulated review of *The Pact*. She makes an anagram of Bjornvig's name, reading in translation 'Gimlet! Ring loud!', because: 'Sometimes I think you have been steeped in your environment like a biscuit dipped in a cup of coffee . . . only hard things ring . . . And do become iron! Then you will feel what the biscuit never gets to feel, the power of the magnet going through you.' Bjornvig absorbs Blixen's magnetic currents without transmitting them and *The Pact* is soggy with unexamined motives.

Yet there is a sadness in *The Pact* that, towards the end, etches lines into its lumpen mass. Bjornvig does finally delineate Blixen's recurring sense of loss. Fierce, jealous, ageing and alone, she is a compelling figure, hard either to accept or forget.

Nicci Gerrard

Revenge of the yoghurt in Larry Cohen's *The Stuff*

FILMS

Junk shock

John Coleman

The Stuff (15)
Prince Charles; Cannon, Oxford Street
Volunteers (15)
Cannon, Oxford Street
The Man with Two Brains (15)
Scala; from 2 May, ICA
Mixed Blood (18)
Cannons, Oxford Street and Panton Street
Creepers (18)
Cannon, Panton Street

FROM A POISONED source it comes cheaply into the home. Whole families, never more together, settle down to ingest it in larger doses, echoing Hamlet: 'As if increase of appetite had grown/By what it fed on'. Then *it* devours *them*, reducing them to husks, replacing innards with a bland white goo. Death of the mind, death of the spirit, howling mouths which horribly expand to make Francis Bacon's papal screamers look mild: this is a projected future for humankind. And, of course, I could be talking about my revered colleague Hugo Williams's weekly subject: instant, swallowable TV. Which is one of the better ironies that just might lurk in Larry Cohen's **The Stuff**, a mismanaged sick comedy billed as 'a film that eats you up'.

Ostensibly we have here a junk-food pudding, resembling carton-yoghurt, that is sweeping America, to the detriment of emperors of ice-cream who hire an ex-FBI smoothie as industrial spy. This Mo (played as engagingly as possible by laid-back Michael Moriarty) then wriggles his way through a plot which has a guilt-ridden telly promoter of 'The Stuff', Nicole (Andrea Marcovicci), and a smart juve Jason (Scott Bloom), who has seen his nearest and dearest succumb to the hyped new product, as sterling allies.

Using flame-throwers and a mad ultra-right colonel (Paul Sorvino) with his private army, old Mo bests the capitalist swine behind the all-purpose and lethal aliment. One up, then, for national self-criticism. But, oh my stars and stripes, what a botch the film makes of a rich notion, spiritedly broached and with a good, cynical close. Movies now need chases and special-effects spew and a gearing to low IQs, so it seems.

Turn, for instance, to the splendidly promising first ten minutes of Nicholas Meyer's **Volunteers**, which dares to open on documentary footage of JFK's Peace Corps speech ('What you can do for your country') as well as space-shot and bleak Vietnam clips before presenting us with a wealthy kid out of Preston Sturges having to run from a poker game and an angry Black he's indebted to. Tom Hanks, a fresh face to me, is quite super as this Lawrence Bourne III, a relaxed chap from Yale who seems to have wandered in from the Thirties or Forties film scene and finds himself reluctantly fleeing to help build a bridge in Thailand. His credentials are early established: 'It's not that I can't help those people — I don't want to.' This queasy honesty, thunderingly refreshing, inevitably makes him the local hero who does span the river, get the girl, lazily turn up trumps. 'Is your chin getting bigger?' he asks with consummate uninnocence of an all-American true-blue who is to get brainwashed to the

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People's Army cause in the deftest of cuts, slick, unfussy.

Stamina, though, is what does for this. I invoked Sturges and — by implication — what he would have made from the naughty premises of a screenplay (Ken Levine, David Isaacs) that none-too-gently undermines its country's stances and geo-political postures. An awful dreariness of long, last chase-sequences, presumptively the manner of speedy, random activity that engages the attention of teenagers the world over, finally douses the fireworks fizzing from the script and the nicely subversive performances. All the more maddening, in that one starts by moaning that they don't make them like that any more. In relaxed Hanks and Rita Wilson's sparky Beth, they've cast hugely competent actors to fit an old, wisecracking sexual mould; then they've thrown them away.

But what Penelope Houston once and for all time called Kleenex-movies, disposable stuff, are there to stay for eye-wipe and a rapid rejection. Junk-movies — a fast feint at nourishment — are the in-thing. Videos make the market volatile. Hence the jump to screen of a Steve Martin vehicle, Carl Reiner's **The Man with Two Brains**, which again starts off with immense, dirty-talk promise — he a brain-surgeon, she (Kathleen Turner) a raving nympho he weds — only to founder in fumbles, concessions to a complacently underrated mass audience. One-liners do not a sonnet make. Still, this is a cerebellum-swap movie — presumably held back because of cranial coincidence with Martin's *All of Me* — of parts, too widely separated to work. Paul Morrissey's **Mixed Blood** is a cocked-up nonsense, a sprint on the wild side of New York, hilariously bad with a gang-running momma and son giving free lessons in pseudo-documentary 'acting'. **Creepers** belongs in that maggot-ridden, diseased area we might term Cinema Emetica, if we were sounder on our Italian. Best bet for Londoners: a Metro season of newish Soviet films. □

Recommended viewing

A regular selection by our critic from films still doing the rounds

A Room with a View* Palpable hit by uncommonly literate-visual Ivory-Merchant-Jhabvala trinity, exquisitely matching their meet to Forster's 1908 barbed, poised, pagan and wittily resonant shake-up of class-crossing Edwardian amour, via Florentine trip, for awakened young Lucy (Helena Bonham Carter, Maggie Smith, Denholm Elliott, Daniel Day Lewis).

No Surrender Liverpudlian black stuff, seamed with horror and hilarity, as Alan Bleasdale's vivid OAPs, rival Protestants and Catholics, are misbooked into sleazy, crook-owned club with harassed new manager (Michael Angelis) for New Year's Eve celebrations and confrontations. Peter Smith directs (Bernard Hill, Joanne Whalley, Ray McAnally).

Clockwise Zany any-road movie début by prime farceur Michael Frayn, writing time-obsessed comprehensive head John Cleese into calamity-strewn race to Norwich conference, driven in dad's car — and out of and into his wits — by truant girl pupil, towards higher-lunacy finale. (Sharon Maiden, Alison Steadman).

OPERA

Perfect picture

Andrew Clements

Otello
Welsh National Opera

IT'S BECOME a commonplace to observe that *Otello* improves upon Shakespeare's original, that the drama was pared down to its bare essentials by Verdi and his librettist Boito and its vital constituents crucially enhanced. All that one usually takes with a pinch of salt, for productions of the opera rarely deliver such cogency. But Welsh National Opera's new staging does, without any fudging or equivocation; Peter Stein's previous forays into opera may have ended ignominiously (a projected *Ring* cycle in Paris was abandoned after *Rheingold*) but here, given the backing of a company that has consistently taken a pride in attracting the most exciting Continental directors to produce for it, he has manufactured one of the most perfectly conceived and executed productions to have appeared in Britain in the last decade.

I caught up with it at the Birmingham Hippodrome, a bigger theatre than WNO's home at the New Theatre in Cardiff; in a smaller house the tension the opera generates must be quite overwhelming. As a starting point Stein and his designer Lucio Fanti have created sets and costumes that are utterly integrated and elegant, taking Verdi at his word and placing the action squarely in the Renaissance, with the proscenium replaced by a gilded picture frame and a series of ravishing stage images that utilise all the tricks of perspective and *trompe l'oeil* that 15th-century artists employed, and carrying the convention right through into the disposition of the protagonists themselves. Every confrontation is conceived down to the finest detail in terms of hierarchy and relationship; the drama is mapped out before one's eyes. When the action requires it, the rigorous placement is broken down: Iago steps out of the frame on to the forestage to address the audience and to deliver his creed; Otello and Iago swear their oath of vengeance from the same place. The sudden violations of such a perfectly ordered world take on enormous emotional power, so that, again, the dramatic structure is precisely articulated visually as well as aurally.

Mere description might give the impression that this is a sterile, determinist conception with nothing left to instinct and with its emotional power squeezed out. As I've already indicated, nothing could be further from the truth. The stage continually teems with life; the chorus erupts from all its entrances, often occupying the focal points while the principal characters are forced to weave around them. Never before in my experience has this opera belonged so much to the ordinary people, who begin by adulating Otello and end by reviling him; the mechanics of primitive power politics are laid before our eyes. The big choruses in each act (the whole opera is conceived here in two massive spans with only one short interval) take on a significance at least as great as that of the famous arias, and in some cases much more so.

From his three principals Stein has extracted performances that must exceed anything they have managed before, though Helen Field's Desdemona is only the latest in a line of utterly absorbing, passionate portrayals; here her vulnerability and very frail-looking appearance are moving in themselves, and she sings with an attention to verbal nuance that captures every gram of pathos the role can offer. Jeffrey Lawton's Moor is physically extraordinary, a massive dark presence that seems to absorb any light that falls upon it, a well of despair on another plane of existence altogether. He takes his big numbers with boldness and authentic, beefy tone. Much of the opera, though, is dominated by Donald Maxwell's Iago, not at all the conventional portrayal of evil, but a wickedly cheerful, leering presence, a malign jester insinuating himself in the chorus scenes, controlling the action from the very front of the stage, at times even shutting off whole areas of the acting space with drapes. His manipulations of the characters around him are perfectly observed, scrupulously realised.

Without a plausible musical performance, of course, all this would have been wasted effort. The singing may not be in the highest international flight, but I am willing to bet that so much vocal commitment right through the cast in a Verdi opera is pretty rare and the performance is driven along with palpable excitement by Richard Armstrong, aided and abetted by first-rate orchestral playing. It is, in short, precisely what company opera should be more often, dramatically cogent, musically satisfying, a production that takes the participants beyond their imaginings. Anyone with the slightest belief in the viability of opera as a plausible dramatic organism should seek it out for themselves. □

MIXED MEDIA

Knocking the walls down

Mo Dodson

A revolution in the shape of the arts, apparently defeated ten years ago, is struggling for space to be reborn.

THOSE LITTLE PLAQUES beside paintings in art galleries have increasingly taken to describing works as 'mixed media' because the artist has thrown a bit of sand onto the wet paint or performed some similar piece of aesthetic daredevilry. How debased has the critical jargon become. In the Sixties and early Seventies, 'mixed media' pointed to a whole constellation of revolutionary possibilities: 'mixing media' was part of the more general

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struggle to find a new, communal space outside the gallery system, in which art could be redefined through collective practice.

In those heady days, the distinction between artist and audience was attacked and the work of art as commodity-object in a saleroom was condemned; artists from a variety of backgrounds took to the theatre, the streets and the fields to perform and relate in new ways to the social and physical environment. Attempts were made to dissolve the boundaries between the media, between High and Low culture, between art and science. It seemed as if people working in dance, drama, music, film, video, the 'plastic' arts (painting, sculpture, etc.) and writers of various persuasions were all converging on a point where real changes might take place in the arts, and between art and the community.

In practice, the boundaries between media have by and large remained intact; a ghetto mentality has clamped itself down on what were once avant-garde initiatives. There now exist a number of pockets of activity — from mainstream painting to experimental music — each possessed of its own ingrown set of references, its own esoteric and inflated evaluative criteria and its own band of self-appointed critics, who very rarely attend to work outside their particular ghetto.

Even Performance Art has never really made satisfactory contact with the performing arts. Contemporary and experimental dance still relies for much of its effect on a narrow scale of reference to the largely uninteresting dance work of the last ten or 15 years. Community Arts seem to have degenerated from their exciting beginnings into a kind of social work practised by ageing hippies and agit-prop clowns, employed by the State to keep juveniles off the streets, to cover up derelict walls with second-rate murals and to jerry-build playgrounds for council estates at cut-rate prices. Independent film and video seem to have disappeared into a post-semiotic labyrinth, while experimental theatre has tended to divorce itself from any kind of thought whatsoever, partly as a result of the pernicious assumption that acting technique alone can produce a 'deeper', non-verbal, theatrical art.

The situation does appear to be grim. The chances of discovering work today that combines media-mixing, popular appeal and intellectual credibility seem even slimmer than they did ten years ago. There are, however, some hopeful signs. The Arts Council now has a unit devoted entirely to 'combined arts' — while, here and there, there are artists beginning once more to escape from the ghetto. Women artists, such as those contributing to the recent touring exhibit 'Pandora's Box', have attempted to redefine the nature of the gallery-space and the relationships between artists and public by taking up an informal, non-competitive stance. The London Musicians' Collective, The London Film-makers Co-op and London Video Arts still occasionally encourage collaborations, while some Performance Artists are trying to escape the stereotypes created by people like Stuart Brisley, at one end of the spectrum, and Gilbert and George at the other.

One of their central problems — especially those whose collaborations involve the use of live performance — is the need to create an adequate physical and social space in which to exist. Many artists still work out of doors, but, apart from exceptions like Andy Goldsworthy, their work often redefines the outside space as another elitist art gallery; while most indoor spaces available for experimental collaboration tend to cater to minority, ghetto audiences. It's here that venues like the ICA, Riverside and The Place come in useful, keeping alive the practice of media collaborations. The ICA, for instance, will have a whole month of mixed-media performance work in May of this year.

One set of people to have seriously confronted the problem of creating a healthy, social space for collaborative work is the group that runs the Chisenhale Dance Space. Originally part of the New Dance movement, the group has moved towards a more open and inclusive stance towards the contemporary 'common culture' in its various manifestations — and its policy of creating a context where popular and ethnic forms can meet experimental forms of dance and performance is now beginning to succeed.

Paul Hollin

Mixing it at Chisenhale: members of the Henriette Van Reesma's Chip Gone Dance Theatre Company

As well as providing a space for performers as widely varying as Indian Temple dancers, Lindy-Hoppers, African Music and Dance Groups, Morris Dancers and Scottish Country Dancers, the Chisenhale Space accommodates experimental dance and Performance Art. For this coming July they have booked a month of mixed-media performances and, during the coming year, they will house the Arts Council-funded Performance Art in London. To accompany this, the Chisenhale group plans to run courses in the history and practice of Performance Art. In addition, as a regular feature of its work, it provides classes and workshops in ethnic and creative dance for the local community. The problem of creating an *enabling* space for real collaborative work is at last being faced with something like an intelligent and humane strategy — and perhaps it is not accidental that such a problem, one involving the behaviour of people within spaces, has been most directly confronted by dancers. □

For more information on the Chisenhale Dance Space, ring 01-981 6617, or write to 64/84 Chisenhale Road, London E3 5QY.

DANCE

Look again

Stephanie Jordan

Romeo and Juliet
Covent Garden
American Ballroom Theatre
Sadler's Wells

IT'S ONLY RARELY that we find a dancer who can re-illuminate a work that is over-familiar. Gelsey Kirkland, the American who chose to return to the stage with the Royal Ballet after a troubled two-year break from dancing, brings back to MacMillan's **Romeo and Juliet** the freshness of the Juliets of Margot Fonteyn and Lynn Seymour 21 years ago.

I never saw Kirkland dance Juliet back in 1980, but I gather she has changed her interpretation considerably since then into a matured though nonetheless entirely apt account of a young girl susceptible to profound emotion. Her choice now is to be restrained, the adolescent Capulet transfigured by the situation that envelops her and gaining power by contrast with the great weight and commotion of the rest of the ballet. In long stillnesses, she now allows the music to speak the feelings inside her, numbed at the prospect of the inimical match with Paris or freezing on her tomb in the family vault. She becomes all the more eloquent when she lets her feeling and her power as a woman unfold into expansive and generous lyricism with Romeo (Anthony Dowell).

The final reception recalled Fonteyn, a justifiable welcome back for a ballerina who demonstrated huge versatility and greatness when very young in the Seventies and who is now ripe to inspire our choreographers and our dancers in the Eighties.

Opening this year's American season at Sadler's Wells is an event very different from the programmes of modern dance that normally fill this slot. **American Ballroom Theatre**, riding on the wave of nostalgia for Fred and Ginger, tap and jazz, provides an exhibition of couple dancing labelled *Sheer Romance*. The show, choreographed by John Roudis and staged by William Whitener, develops in sections of ballroom, Lindy, Spanish, Latin, culminating in a white ballroom ballet and the company of eight gliding to the *Blue Danube*.

The exhibition is true to the tradition and spirit of its forms but straighter, less bechiffoned and less grimaceful in performance than what we see on *Come Dancing*. All these dancers have been bred on competition (Artistic Directors Pierre Dulaine and Yvonne Marceau are well-known here as British Exhibition Champions). However, outside the ghastly context of competitive dancing, they demonstrate rather more clearly the art of the form: just how rhythmically subtle it is, how the steps ride persuasively across the musical patterns, hanging back,

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curving indulgently behind then catching them up, decorating and simplifying them.

The couple choreography is the centre of interest, most of all the adagio dancing of Dulaine and Marceau. There is the sheer serenity of the lifts, and drama inherent in the virtuosity of their style, Marceau's limpidity suddenly impassioned by a swinging dive to the floor or a waterfall descent winding round Dulaine's body. □

THEATRE

Sight-seeing

Benedict Nightingale

Romeo and Juliet
SHAKESPEARE *Stratford*
Time
DAVE CLARK, DAVID SOAMES & JEFF DANIELS
Dominion

IT'S BEEN QUITE a week for improbable assaults on the peepers. Did I really see the ten-foot high head of Laurence Olivier, looking like a great peeled tortoise, appear from a flying Fabergé egg? Well, I pinched myself at the time, or rather the *Time*, and think I must have done.

And was that Shakespeare's Verona, with those motorbikes and designer jeans, plus a smart red sports car to give new meaning to Romeo's words about Tybalt 'returning in Triumph'? And his Mantua, with those circus performers and vast *Spitting Image* dummies of Thatcher and Reagan parading the streets, all because our hero mentions that the apothecary's shop is closed, it 'being holiday'? Yes; but here I'd no need to test-squeeze my skin, because such ostentatious updatings aren't unusual at the RSC, especially when Michael Bogdanov is master of the revels.

His production of **Romeo and Juliet** is certainly fun. The visual frolics — Mercutio taking refuge from Tybalt's chain-flail on the car-bonnet, because he knows he won't risk damaging its glossy paintwork — serve to emphasise the play's youthful sparkle and dash, the feeling it gives of being less a tragedy, more a comedy that goes badly wrong. It should bring O-level drudges back to life and maybe impress those who think, with Bogdanov, that family wealth and power can be as oppressive to natural feeling today as ever in Renaissance Verona. Richard Moore's Capulet is certainly a contemporary enough figure, with his huge desk, intercom and grey-suited secretaries.

The problem is that young love gets a bit lost in all the eye-grabbing detail and, hardly less seriously, that Bogdanov has deliberately altered the play's moral shape. Out goes every word of the original after Juliet's suicide, including the reconciliation of Montague and Capulet, to be replaced by the prologue, which is spoken in the past tense by a bored prince in front of golden statues of the dead protagonists. Photographers snap, a film-crew shoots what's yet another display of wealth and power; and, once this very formal unveiling has finished, off trot patriarchs who don't seem reconciled at all. Indeed, nothing has changed: an ending doubtless to the taste of modern sceptics, but a grotesque distortion of Shakespeare, who wanted to suggest that out of love, pain, death, good might come.

It says much for Niamh Cusack and Sean Bean, entrusted as they are by Bogdanov's scheme with demonstrating the fragility rather than the force of love, that they make as strong an impression as they do. Her Juliet isn't fraught and stricken enough at crises, but manages to be sweet without cuteness, warm without mawkishness. His Romeo is more authentically distraught than her and also achieves a nice balance between sensitivity and virility. The evening's other pluses include Hugh Quarshie's Tybalt, a wonderfully mean narcissist and aggressive swaggerer, and Robert Demeger's Friar Laurence, a genially confident scoutmaster shattered by the discovery that some knots refuse to be neatly tied or untied; but Michael Kitchen's Mercutio is too much the boozy cynic and plonking mocker, too little the mercurial wit and prankster.

Actually, one of the best of the RSC's recent Mercutios turned up in a pretty peculiar place last week. Transformed by **Time** into a sort of aerial Pharoah with a neon-light ruff, Bernard Lloyd dangled in his throne over the Dominion's stage uttering terminal threats against planet Earth in that marvellously melodious tenor of his. He was, it appeared, one of three galactic judges appointed by Akash the Ultimate Word of Truth, alias the pink, bald Olivier on 3-D film, to decide if our world should be totalled. That meant listening to nearly three hours of argument between Jeff Shankley, a prosecuting counsel looking like something between a white-suited Liberace and a stringy-haired Howard Hughes, and the ever-elfin Cliff Richard, in whose hands the defence of humankind had been improbably placed: quite a task, considering that much of this Ciceronian battle was lost in the din of rock music and much consisted of such lines as (Cliff singing) 'if you knew what we'd been through to get this far, you wouldn't be so cool, so cruel, so clever, you wouldn't be so cold, so bold, so together.'

Eventually Earth is put on probation, thanks to Cliff's promise to use his voice to convert humanity to a sort of ersatz Norman Vincent Pealism; and I, for one, was left wondering if global extinction wouldn't be a more sufferable alternative. Still, spectacularly preposterous though the show may be, it's also preposterously spectacular. Green laser beams splatter the stage, white lights whirl and whizz, to what might be the sound of the spaceship in *Close Encounters* landing; giant metal pods descend from the flies, followed by punks on trapezes; and Lord Olivier continues to talk like a supersonic curate ('the one thing you have absolute control over is your attitude') from his sci-fi curate's egg. This is how that admirable designer, Jon Napier, has spent his share of the £3.5 million the show apparently cost. I wonder how he feels, having built the theatrical equivalent of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, only to see it growing popcorn. □

TELEVISION

Pet theories

Hugo Williams

I WASN'T CLEAR why *all* the seven had to go to Newcastle to say goodbye to two of their wives before hitting Spain for, presumably, the next series of **Auf Wiedersehen, Pet** (ITV), but I'm sure there was a reason and the ensuing turmoil was of a customary brilliance.

It was strange, after two series on the loose in Germany and the home counties, to be taking a mini-cab to Oz's godforsaken housing estate and to be about to see what vandalised skip of a home-life had been responsible for this one-man punch-up. 'Home sweet home,' said Oz to his co-billet Moxy, summoning courage to insert his long-unused key. 'Want a lozenge?' 'Yeah, great,' said Moxy, cheering up momentarily.

After three years away Oz is still quite prepared to roughen up his wife's live-in, but less so when it sinks in that this isn't his wife: she's upped sticks long ago and is about to emigrate to Italy with a waiter. 'Stay with me mother?' says Oz in outrage, dumping himself on a friend, 'I can't knock *her* up. It's after eleven at night. I haven't got her a present.'

The inclusion of a totally unacceptable member into the group is a subtle signal of invisible ties, but Oz stretches even one's vicarious group-sympathy to breaking point. His sprawled-back Y-front rummaging, his rubbishy sleeping-bag breakfast times, butter gripped between knees for outlandish toast-spreading, make prissy nags of us all. I habitually hoover after the show, in homage to his seeming ability to re-cycle the world in the wrong direction. It was a lovely touch that during the ill-conceived snatch-back of his son from the school football field — Wayne kidnaps the wrong No. 7! — he should get chatting with his wife's rough-edged boyfriend and find him so unaccountably simpatico. It has to be said that more happens in one episode of this immortal series than in seven nights on the other channels. The authors know of old how much faster audiences can travel with them than is commonly supposed, once character and plot-points are out of the way. Praise fails me.

'In *EastEnders*, the plot grows out of the characters. In *Brookside* the characters are placed in positions of social conflict,' said an unconvinced critic on the **South Bank Show**'s (ITV) tribute to Phil Redmond, creator of the Liverpool soap. I couldn't agree more; nor could one of the show's board of 'writers': 'We put someone with black and white views into a grey area and take it from there.' (An NHS nurse obliged to go private for family reasons, for example.) Even Redmond agrees that the characters were conceived as cyphers: the middle-management chap on the way down, the thrusting trade unionist passing him on the way up, or, more probably, at the letterbox they have had to install in the Close to make sure that characters still speak to one another. Poor old Gavin and

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his black economy cookers: 'He was written out via a brain haemorrhage'. Had the cypher started to fray?

With its six little private houses like Monopoly board pieces, all stuffed with social stereotypes under rigorous authorial sanction, **Brookside** (C4) is your classic anal-erotic board game and could certainly do with more not less soap in this context.

The houses are 'real', apparently, 'but their density is lower to allow for wider camera angles' and would have a real value on the open market of around £30,000 if the production company they house looked remotely like going the way of old Gavin and his cookers. The recent highly unsoaplike seige and hostage aberration was popular with the punters, but 'inappropriate' according to the writerly consensus round the board table. Too near the bone perhaps. More likely, given Liverpool's inner-city breakdown, might be a real-life raid on this highly liveable-in film set by the inhabitants of the real-life, real-run-down Brookside Rd, for example.

The point of Richard Dawkins's *Nice Guys Finish First* on **Horizon** (BBC2) was not so much a reversal of accepted sex manners as the misappropriation by extremist elements, notably Thatcherite ones, of the ideas in his book *The Selfish Gene*. Too many people had read it by title only, said Dawkins, as a biological justification for a cut-throat competitive world. He'd even been personally blamed for the election of Mrs Thatcher, whereas 'the selfish gene' more often gave rise to self*less* cooperative behaviour. He demonstrated this with the help of a few rounds of 'Prisoner's Dilemma', in which two players hazard a 'C' or a 'D' for 'Cooperate' or 'Defect', scoring highest if both cooperate, middling if both defect, but lowest if an attempt to cooperate meets with a (then higher scoring) defect. It will be seen that 'Defect' is the safest course, as in life, but only in the short term. If we illogically trust one another we score more; by rationally mistrusting, we get less: reciprocal altruism is the name of the game, from herring fishing and commonland grazing to mutual tick-extraction in gannets and telephone-message-taking in humans. Fed with various differing approaches to the game, two computers proved that the winning strategy was also the simplest: tit-for-tat. This strategy had won by being nice — and an even nicer programme might do even better.

It seems we need policing into being more cooperative than our reason allows, from government upwards. 'Tit-for-tat' means being 1) never the first to defect; 2) never envious; 3) only winning when opponent is doing well; 4) forgiving. It's simple. I was fascinated to learn that 'the disease of peace was rampant in the first two years of WW1' when instinctive truces kept breaking out and had to be stopped by the introduction of random attacks, than which nothing could have been more destructive of tit-for-tat trust. The thought was fresh in my mind when I heard someone on **Panorama** (BBC1) pouring cold water on Cory Aquino's freeing of communist leaders in the hope of enlisting their support in the fight against poverty. Unlike some, she would seem to have learnt how to win at Prisoner's Dilemma. □

Strange meeting

Naseem Khan

SOME YEARS AGO in Scotland I came across a group of Indian dancers whose bit for multiracialism was to dance in tartan saris. It seemed then, and has done since, not a bad symbol for a lot of multicultural arts work — good-hearted, a trifle absurd, undeniably skin-deep.

Would this be another case of the tartan saris, I wondered, scuttering into Cardiff's Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Samaj Centre on a recent cold wet Monday night? Conceivably, for the formula for the night's show could well seem perverse: Wales meets India; Celtic myth merges with Indian folk tale; Indian classical dances rub shoulders with Welsh folk dances. A real Christmas pudding. In fact, things turned out quite otherwise.

The Samaj Centre itself was a minor achievement. Built by the area's Gujarati community, it's a custom-built community centre: new and spartan as yet, but undeniably commodious and, in the general context of under-provision for Black and Asian communities, a welcome asset. Passing through a number of ante-rooms I found myself in the large, high hall at the back: more like a sports hall to look at than a theatre. A large peacock-blue curtain had been hung covering all the back wall, in front of which sat six musicians: musically mixed musicians, from Celtic harp on the right to tabla on the left. In the middle, beaming benignly, sat the well-known cellist Anup Kumar Biswas, who had composed the music for what was to follow. In front of the musicians, surrounded on three sides by rows of waiting audience, was the large square acting space. All the way round it, in a ring, the performers sat cross-legged, all 44 of them. This project — a retelling of the story of Trystan and Essyllt (or Tristan and Isolde as the English know it) using both Eastern and Western performance techniques — was in fact to prove an extraordinarily pioneering, fresh-spirited effort.

The reason why it worked goes back to the project's roots. It was set up by the small Welsh Theatr Taliesin and grew directly out of its successful previous show. A retelling, through a single story teller, of the delightful fables from the Indian *Panchatantra*, it was later augmented by the Indian/Western music group Gemini. More to the point, it taught its creators, Nigel Watson and Stuart Cox, a great deal about the old, simple art of story telling and the dramatic folk techniques — Eastern and Western — that have developed. *Trystan and Essyllt* extended that experience.

It also deepened it, for the project — very much the first of its kind — was set up in conjunction with Cardiff's Asian communities. Open performance workshops in art forms from drama to Odissi, Kathak and Bharat Natyam (three classical dance styles of India) were based in the centre for an intensive month. Participation in the show was open to all and drew a satisfying mix of Gujerati and Sikh, Hindu and Muslim as well as native Welsh. Choreographed by four professional dancers (three Indian and one Welsh), it had four professional performers at its core, but the rest were all locals.

It's easy to see the attraction of the Trystan story. There's the un-named champion (Trystan) who emerges to defeat the community's enemy (the Irish marauder, Morholt). There's ill-fated, unlooked-for love (Trystan and Essyllt, brought together solely by a misdirected love potion). There's a series of tests (King March's attempts to trap his wife, Essyllt, and his nephew Trystan). Finally there's tragedy, when the wounded Trystan gives himself up to death, believing that Essyllt's ship has ominous black sails rather than life-bringing white.

It's a long story that unrolls itself in a saga-like way. Years pass and continents are traversed in it. But, for all that, and for all the pounding rain on the hall's roof, the mixed audience watched attentively as it unrolled. It was told in the style of folk-theatre. The major part was carried on by the four principals — Nick Dowsett as a tight-faced Trystan, Nigel Watson as a commanding King March, Natasha Gomperts and Roshan Bharucha as passionate Essyllt and her faithful maid Branwen.

Watching them closely were the encircling cast, springing up occasionally to play individuals (Irish king, French princess) or to dance or to act a dragon, an exodus, a forest. From the side-lines came the comments of the narrators, in both English and Hindi. Behind them was Anup Kumar Biswas's constant score, providing emotional colouring and a number of extremely haunting lyrical themes. His combination of instruments — Indian flutes, cellos, tambura, tabla and celtic harp — had an extremly sharp and delicate character, responsible for a great deal of the dream-like mood that the piece achieved.

You could debate on what, in the production, was Indian and what was Welsh/English. The appearance of the show was Indian, with the principals' gorgeously-coloured Moghul-type finery. The story was Welsh. The style of movement was largely Indian. But the debate is of academic interest alone. The strength of *Trystan and Essyllt* was that it did find common ground. It found it between people of notably different performing skills. It found it between cultures. Although there are areas which its director Stuart Cox and his assistant Balbir Bahi need to strengthen (a monotony of pace, for instance), it is nevertheless the most heartening example of its kind to appear for some time. □

Trystan and Essyllt *can be seen again in a one-off production in St Davids Hall, Cardiff, on 1 May.*

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Nicholas Murray

Cutting the crap

I RECENTLY overheard behind me in a department store two French customers who has obviously been searching for a cup of coffee. Spotting the restaurant monsieur exclaimed: '*Ah, le café!*' Spotting the 'Closed' sign madame exclaimed with a little more vehemence: '*Merde!*'

The subject of this piece, I'm afraid to say, is that same *merde* (well, the column is called Backchat isn't it?). It is also about the mechanics of local government . . . but let me start at the beginning.

Not far from where I live, there is a piece of open space which achieved a certain notoriety a year or so ago when the bodies of two teenage lovers were discovered on Sunday morning in a dumper truck parked in the middle of it . . . But let's not bring murder into this.

The open space was formerly the site of a children's hospital and, after the hospital's closure, was eyed lasciviously by property speculators keen to build an office block on it. The local community organised against this and, after the usual unremitting struggle, persuaded the council to make it into an open space with the help of money from the GLC's imaginative Community Areas Programme.

It opened three years ago and has already become the site of an annual summer festival as well as providing a much needed oasis of green grass and shrubs for the densely packed flats in which most of the surrounding population live. It is also, and here's the rub, a convenient space for dog-owners (who according to tenancy agreements shouldn't exist but who very palpably do) to exercise their pets and allow the loveable dumb animals to perform those functions the rest of us discharge in some graffiti-strewn public convenience.

Political philosophers will grasp the point straightaway. The freedom of canophiles to defile the grassy spaces is the enslavement of those who wish to lie, sun, toddle or crawl on those same spaces. But try philosophising with a dog-owner rampant.

The community activists who had fought to create the open space in the first place decided to approach the council. Being reasonable people they didn't want to ban the dogs altogether but to set aside an area where the beasts could do their business with impunity. This modest proposal, however, rapidly foundered in municipal complexity. The Borough Engineer's department asked who would enforce such a rule. We will, said the volunteers, but please give us an official notice whose authority we can invoke when confronting some snarling bulldog's or bounding Alsatian's militant handler. No, said the Borough Engineer, the whole idea is out of the question because The Unions Won't Have It (TUWHIT). The principle of TUWHIT, as anyone versed in inner-city Labour politics knows, is a powerful one that squats like an enormous Buddha at the end of any avenue that looks like leading to the solution of some awkward or intractable problems.

In this case TUWHIT was invoked because segregated dog defecation zones were judged to present a problem to the blades of council mowers. The odd turd here and there could be absorbed but a concentration of ordure was too much. But why not have a sand-pit? The kids will play in it and catch diseases. How come Kensington and Chelsea can have such things? It's a Tory borough and it can do what it likes. Oh can it? (This last exchange from the helpless councillors who had been asked to take up the issue.)

Which brings us somewhere near the core of the issue. Labour councillors quite properly have a special relationship with the unions which are the other arm of the Labour movement. And I'm a trade union member too. But, although there are fertile mythologies about the extent of the operation of TUWHIT which are often used as a cover for management rather than trade union inadequacies (the postures of defensiveness into which unions are inevitably propelled unfortunately lend credence to the view of them as wholly negative), there is enough evidence to suggest that there is a great deal wrong with the way Labour councils handle their management responsibilities and the way trade unions deliver a service to the public — that all-important third party in local government.

More than once I have heard Labour councillors privately declare: 'If the Tories or Liberals were in control they wouldn't mess about.' But why should Labour councils mess about? If councillors and their officers can't solve a simple problem like controlling dog dirt in a public place then why not resign and let the opposition parties go in and crack some heads together? If the trade unions really are so unco-operative that they won't let a solution be worked out that will improve the quality of life for a working-class inner-city community, then what the hell are they up to? These are the nasty questions and I don't blame people for not wanting to raise them. What's more, I'm glad I'm not a councillor having to grapple for the answers. It's comfortable in this armchair. But if Labour is to retain its hold on its traditional constituencies and work for them in new and better ways then some of these nettles will have to be caught hold of. We could start simply by admitting there's a problem.

Otherwise, the amateur park-keepers (all members of the Labour Party incidentally) may well decide that they have better things to do than shovel shit. The inner-city electorate is dwindling in numbers and in readiness to vote. Urban political apathy is growing. There are local elections in May. Is anyone putting these facts together? □

Weekend competition

No 2920 **Set by Joyce Johnson**

We already know about Writer's Cramp, Housemaid's Knee and Tennis Elbow, but readers could doubtless introduce us to other occupation-related afflictions. Politician's Tongue? Police Officer's Knuckle? Max. three descriptions of such diseases per entrant, by 1 May.

No 2917 **Set by May Day**

Epigrams encapsulating the views of British politicians or political parties.

Report **By Babe Bio**

Not wot you'd corl a *spectaculer* entry, ither in kwality or kwantity (and, Chas. F. Garvey, would you mind eksplaining wot comp you thort you were *entering*?) but still, too pounds for eech of the well-wicked slogans printed below.

Sideways with the SDP!

TOM DONNELLY

Militant Tendency: Better to march with Marx than Neil to Kinnock.

NAOMI MARKS

Conservatives: An overall majority means never having to say you're wrong.

FRANK ROOTS

Ulster Unionists: Divided we stand — United we fall.

ANON OF MARKET LAVINGTON

The Health Service: see who cares. Vote Conservative.

J. J. JOHNSTON

SDP: Bored with the class parties? Party with the Bordeaux class.
Labour: The Tories say socialism won't work; give us a chance to prove it.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Monster Raving Loony Party: We stand for Sutch and such.

C. FEVER

Conservatives: Flog it; flog them: the Tories give it to you straight.
SDP: For those special moments when you really have nothing to say.

NICOLA MARY RUSH

Liberals: The unbelievable in pursuit of the unattainable.
SDP: Government of the people, for the people, by ME.

NOEL PETTY

Keith Joseph: Education is a precious commodity. Like all precious commodities, its value is enhanced by being in short supply.

ALISON PRINCE

Labour:
If the militants left, we'd be all right,
Though we'd still be left at heart
To right the wrongs left by the right,
But we need your vote to start.

KATIE MALLETT

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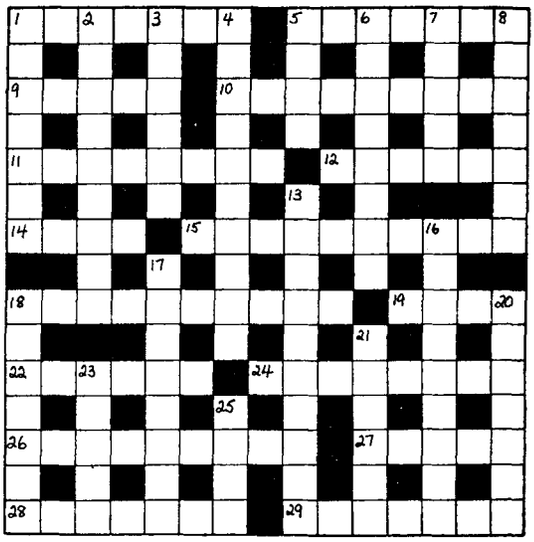
Weekend Crossword 1515

PRIZE: £10 Book Token for the first correct solution opened. Entries to Crossword 1515, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU by first post 6 May.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

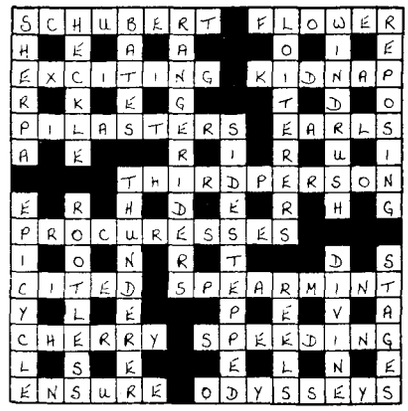
1. The small woman needs as little as possible (7)
5. Stick with a woman before the workers (7)
9. Claw which is a pound in weight (5)
10. Deal suits shuffled in a state of langour (9)
11. Like Oliver Twist without a playwright (8)
12. Playwright about to perform as a ghost (6)
14. Position it in the London area (4)
15. It sticks out for a day in an ungentlemanly politician (10)
18. It means worshipping the woman to wed without being a lot involved with one (10)
19. Stop the race (4)
22. Snub concerning an expert (6)
24. Taking for granted the total in gains distributed (8)
26. Rearranged tour helps to provide comfort (9)
27. Novelist who uses backward-looking material (5)
28. Longed for some time back home (7)
29. Figure for which no company returns include quotation (7)

DOWN

1. They will provide a fire since mother has a bad chest (7)
2. It measures river levels and was needed for the construction of the metro line (9)
3. Misrepresent what the press does? (6)
4. Having the power to grind, this makes the philosopher a bad master (10)
5. Run for the line (4)
6. The sound of a skirt makes him hang about holding his potentiality (8)
7. The old are about to start up being feverish (5)
8. Road which ensures a tiny rise in fighting (7)
13. Showman makes a false promise about the fresh air (10)
16. Sketching half the ships during the excursion (9)
17. Continue holding the flan mixture to be standard (8)
18. Happy about the copper becoming god (7)
20. A very great weight may make man get nothing (7)
21. Plague envelops an ancient city although it is most clean (6)
23. Man swallowed by animal as a drink (5)
25. Boss appears in his Tudor costume (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1513



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ATTRACTIVE MANCHESTER male, 29, socialist, anti-sexist, seeks woman to share relaxation, social times and more. Photo (returned) and letter please. Box (16)2809. N16.12

ATTRACTIVE, PROFESSIONAL, CARIBBEAN woman, 33, seeks wonderful, intelligent, attractive, caring, romantic man, any nationality, for sharing leisure pursuits and laughter! (London area). Photo appreciated. Box (16)2796. N16.13

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN lecturer, 38, thrives on conversation, cinema, music, politics, books, sunshine, Italian food, travel – seeks tall, talkative male companion. North Bucks, Herts, London area. Box (16)2834. N16.14

BEAUTIFUL, HONEY-TONED lady, 22, intelligent, struggling designer, with appreciation for the finer things in life, seeks wealthy, mature gentleman for ongoing relationship. Must be caring and able to give material support. Nationality or status unimportant. Please write with telephone number. Box (16)2838. N16.15

BEWARE THE MAN, John, 55 years, affectionate and caring, seriously interested in finding a lady, 40-50 years, with sense of humour, potentially caring. Penalty: good friend/marriage. Box (16)2839. N16.16

DARE YOU face the world without make-up? John, 37, socialist, peace campaigner, seeks non-smoking, active, socialist feminist friend, 30-45. All replies answered. Box (16)2833. N16.17

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DAVE, COUNCIL gardener, young 41, attractive, shy, isolated, seeks kind, *understanding woman (penfriend initially?).* Interests: jazz, reading, socialism, the meaning of life, the universe & everything! Box (16)2801. N16.18

FEMALE, 37, warm, caring, anti-sexist, 5' 6", pretty, young-looking, active pursuits – wining/dining, film, theatre going, walking, seeks happy, well-balanced, affectionate boyfriend, 35-45, for mutually caring relationship. E. London. Box (15)2761. N15.21

FEMALE, SOCIALIST, 37, single parent with child 11, professional job, seeks warm, caring man, any age for companionship. Living Glasgow, but hopefully moving south soon. Box (16)2816. N16.19

GAY LONDON man, 30, seeks company (over 21), for films, galleries, theatre, evenings out and (maybe) breakfast in bed. Write to Richard: reply promised, photo helps. Box (16)2798. N16.20

HEALTHY, ACTIVE woman, seeks similar male, age 50-60. Ints: golf, music, travel, theatre, naturalist, non-smoker. Manchester area. Box (16)2806. N16.21

INTELLIGENT, SYMPATHETIC, sensitive male, 31, quite attractive, seeks unattached woman, 25-38, Edinburgh area, for conversation, theatre, cinema etc. and possibly deeper relationship. Box (15)2772. N15.23

INTERESTING, SEMI-ATTACHED feminist, 47, West London, seeks unpretentious, non-sexist male for caring, unpossessive relationship. Box (16)2835. N16.22

LESBIAN FEMINIST (well . . . trying), 34, *graduate, London-based. Would like to meet* similar for friendship/special relationship. Into tenderness, tolerance, broad left politics, peace, literature, theatre, films, countryside. Box (15)2792. N15.25

LIGHTER EVENINGS, brightening gardens – an inspiration to be out, not to be wasted. Woman of 41, child 12, would enjoy meeting companionable man 45+, walks, cinema, music. London/South East. Box (15)2760. N15.26

LIVELY CAMBRIDGE bachelor, 40, loves theatre, music, ethnic cultures, warm, healthy sexuality. Seeks an intelligent, aware, sensual woman for loving friendship and whatever follows naturally. Box (16)2836. N16.23

LIVELY, INDEPENDENT woman, 36, one child. Wide interests including violin, wants well informed, interesting, outgoing man, to add sparkle to otherwise happy life. South West. Box (16)2813. N16.24

MALE, 55, N. London, Liberal, fairly serious minded, introverted, affectionate, moderately non-conforming, bloody but unbowed by lonely hearts set backs, seeks woman for permanent, loving relationship. Box (16)2805. N16.25

MALE SOCIALIST, non-smoking, graduate, 33, own house, no ties. Slim mind, body turning traitor but reasonably attractive. Seeks female companion. Midlands/anywhere. Photo? Box (16)2818. N16.26

MALE STUDENT, 24, 6', not unattractive, leftish, seeks female, believes himself to be non-sexist, but is open to correction. Many interests, but especially loves serious music, theatre, cinema, dining out, long walks in the countryside, and travelling. Based London. Go on, take a chance, get in touch. Photo utterly unnecessary. Box (16)2810. N16.27

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"STAR WARS OR EARTH PEACE (YOU CAN'T HAVE BOTH)" Speaker: Gary Lefley of London Region CND. 7.30 pm at Harmood Community Centre, Ferdinand Street, NW1. Organised by Camden CND.

FRI 18 APR - SUN 20 APR

A WORLD STILL TO WIN. A WEA Weekend School. Tutors: *Jeremy Seabrook* and *Trevor Blackwell*. Still some places left for residents and non-residents. Wedgewood Memorial College, Barleston, Stoke-on-Trent. Tel: 078139 2105.

MON 21 APR

THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF BRITISH NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT. Speakers: Duncan Campbell (New Statesman), Brynley Heaven (Hackney Council) and John Chowcott (Trade Union CND). The Assembly Room, Hackney *Town Hall, Mare Street. Org. Hackney CND.*

ENFIELD & HARINGEY. Women & Prehistory in the novels of Jean Auel. Muswell Hill Library, N.10. 8pm. Enfield & Haringey Branch. **The Socialist Party of Great Britain.** Admission free.

WED 23 APR

VALUES IN BRITISH POLITICS What They Are and What They Should Be. A major lecture series, Wednesdays at 1.05pm at St James's Church Piccadilly. This Week: **Robin Cook MP.**

FRI 25 APR

SHAW SOCIETY. The Rt. Hon. P. K. Archer, Q.C., M.P. on "Shaw and the Masses." At Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. Coffee 6.30pm. Lecture 7.00pm.

SAT 26 APR

CRISIS IN MASCULINITY. CONFERENCE ON GENDER RELATIONS at Corams Fields, 93 Guilford Street, London WC1. Speakers, film, discussion. Registration: 10.00 am. Finish: 6.00 pm. £5 (£2.50 concessions). Booking/Info s.a.e. Elphick Trust, 175 Gordon Road, London SE15 3RT.

SAT 3 MAY

CONCERT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND JUSTICE at the Swiss Cottage Centre, 19 Winchester Road NW3. Music: Yellow Bell and the Eritrean Cultural Band and Soca Disco. Eritrean Food. Bar. Videos: African Peoples Liberation and The Four Horsemen. Exhibitions. 8 till late. Any queries call 01-586 5272.

PHILIPPINES — HOW MUCH HAS CHANGED? Conference and AGM. 10-5, Catholic Chaplaincy, 111 Gower Street, WC1. *Tube: Goodge Street. For more information* contact: PSG, 152 Grangeway, NW6. Tel: 01-624 7819.

FRI 9 MAY

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MISANTHROPIC MUSINGS: INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE
HOW DID THE INTERVIEW GO, THEN?
NOT TOO GOOD REALLY, THEY ALL APPEARED VERY STRAIGHT SO WE DECIDED TO APPLY THE HOMOPHOBIC TEST
WHAT'S THAT?
IN MID INTERVIEW HAND THEM A FULL CUP OF COFFEE AND AT THE SAME TIME INTRODUCE THE WORD LESBIAN CASUALLY INTO AN APPROPRIATE SENTENCE AT END OF INTERVIEW CALCULATE 'TWITCH' OR 'HOMOPHOBIC' FACTOR BY FINDING AREA OF COFFEE STAIN
AND
WE WERE THWARTED BY A LOT OF THEM MOPPING UP WITH PAPER HANKIES BUT WE SUSPECTED THAT THEY ALL HAD FAILED
JANIS GOODMAN

CHESS

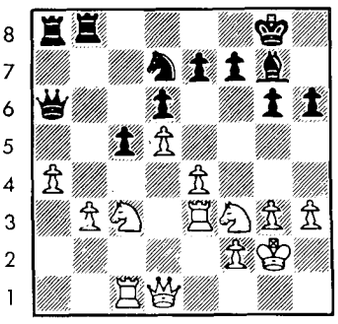
JUDGING matters by Elo points per kilo the strongest chess-playing country in the world is Iceland. In winning this year's Hastings tournament Margeir Petursson became the fifth Icelandic GM. In a population of no more than a quarter of a million they also have 5 IMs and 38 other internationally rated players. A regular series of strong events in Reykjavik has stimulated local interest, the latest being a match in February between the Nordic and US chess federations which ended in a 12-12 tie. In spite of the participation of six Icelandic players, it was Harry Schüssler of Sweden who was the hero of the Nordic side, winning both his games. His second win came in a sharp line that is causing problems for the many devotees of the Benoni.

Schüssler-Fedorovicz, Reykjavik 1986. Modern Benoni. 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. c4 c5 4. d5 exd5 5. cxd5 d6 6. Nc3 g6 7. Bf4 Bg7 8. Qa4+ Bd7 The point of White's play is that he now gains tempo through the attack on d6. **9. Qb3 Qc7 10. e4 0-0 11. Nd2 Nh5 12. Be3 f5 13. exf5 gxf5 14. Be2 f4 15. Bxc5 Na6** 15 . . . f3 had already been tried in Korchnoi-Nunn, London 1984, and the verdict was that after 16. Bxf3 Rxf3 17. gxf3! Qxc5 18. Qxb7 Black's attack fails. **16. Ba3 Rae8 17. Nce4 Nf6 18. Bxd6** Schüssler just helps himself to some material and forces Black to embark on a rather desperate attack. **Qa5 19. Nc3 Rxe2+ 20. Kxe2 Re8+ 21. Kf1 Bf5 22. Kg1 Ng4 23. Nf3 Nxf2 24. Kxf2 Nc5** The reply to this is killing, but the time for improvements is past: e.g. after 24 . . . Bxc3 both 25. Qxc3 Qb6+ 26. Qd4 Qxd6 27. Rhe1 and 25. bxc3 Nc5 26. Bxc5 Qxc5+ 27. Nd4 extinguish Black's counterplay. **25. Qb5! Nd3+ 26. Kg1 Qd8 27. Bc5 Bxc3 28. bxc3 Re2 29. Bd4 Qe7 30. h3 Rb2 31. d6 1-0.** A pro-Benoni innovation is badly needed here.

The event that did more than anything else to make chess popular in Iceland was the 1972 Fischer-Spassky match. Could Kasparov-Karpov 1986 produce similar results here? This month's *Newsflash* (the British Chess Federation's official monthly bulletin) invites suggestions as to how the opportunity can be exploited, citing as a further encouraging precedent the way in which the Euwe-Alekhine matches turned the Netherlands chess-nuts. Of course, Euwe was Dutch and Fischer was unique. There is also the British press factor to reckon with. The paltry coverage of the GLC International shows us what to expect from 'quality' dailies.

In the meantime the next major London event is a trial of strength between the UK champion, in the form of Jon Speelman, and Lev Alburt, the US champion. These two play an 8-game match at the Great Eastern Hotel, starting on 14 May. Having drawn more games than he would have liked at the GLC, Jon tells me that he is determined to make a lively fight of the match. Alburt will also be out to redeem his reputation from the battering it received at Short's hands in last year's match, in which he suffered from his addiction to Alekhine's Defence. In his other Black incarnation as an upholder of the Benkö Gambit he is a tougher proposition, as in this game from the US-Nordic match:

Hjartarson - Alburt, Reykjavik 1986. Benkö Gambit. 1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 b5 4. cxb5 a6 5. bxa6 g6 6. Nc3 Bxa6 7. Nf3 d6 8. e4 Bxf1 9. Kxf1 Bg7 10. g3 0-0 11. Kg2 Nbd7 12. Re1 Qb6 13. Re2 Rfb8 14. h3 Qa6 15. Bg5 h6 16. Be3 Nb6 17. Rc1 Nc4 18. Nxe3 19. Rxe3 Nd7 20. a4



All quite standard stuff so far, and yet suddenly Black concocts a combination involving the sacrifice of a whole rook. **c4! 21. Nb5 cxb3 22. Nc7 Qxa4 23. Nxa8 Nc5!** Threat: 24 . . . b2. **24. Rxc5 dxc5 25. Nc7 c4 26. e5 Qa5 27. d6 b2 28. Qb1 c3 29. e6 fxe6** Refusing to be conned into 29 . . . c2? 30. Qxc2 b1=Q 31. exf7+ Kh7 32. Qxb1 Rxb1 33. dxe7 and the White pawns win through. **30. Re1 exd6 31. Nxe6 Qf5! 32. Ned4 Qxb1 33. Rxb1 Re8** and the mighty passed pawns gave Black an easy win in the ending.

George Botterill

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This England

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☐ The gloved royal hands that placed the crown upon Charles's head that day had been seen the night before wielding the barbecue fork. This daring move was typically shrewd, part of a subtle process of bringing the institution of monarchy ever closer to the people. — *Woman* (Mrs C. Smith)

☐ A man who pledged £5 to church funds for every mole brought to him, dead or alive, has upset parishoners. The vicar, the Rev Batt, said, 'We have turned down the offer of £1 per mole because we wouldn't want to make money for the church that way.' — *Daily Mail* (Alfred Voller)

☐ 'It is, indeed, a paradox that so successful a company as British Nuclear Fuels should be so widely regarded as a problem-ridden enterprise. I happen to believe that the problems are ones of perception rather than reality . . . there is a yawning comprehension gap between the engineers and scientists in the industry and the public outside. We simply do not speak the same language.' — Christopher Harding, new chairman of BNFL — *Observer* (I. Emmett)

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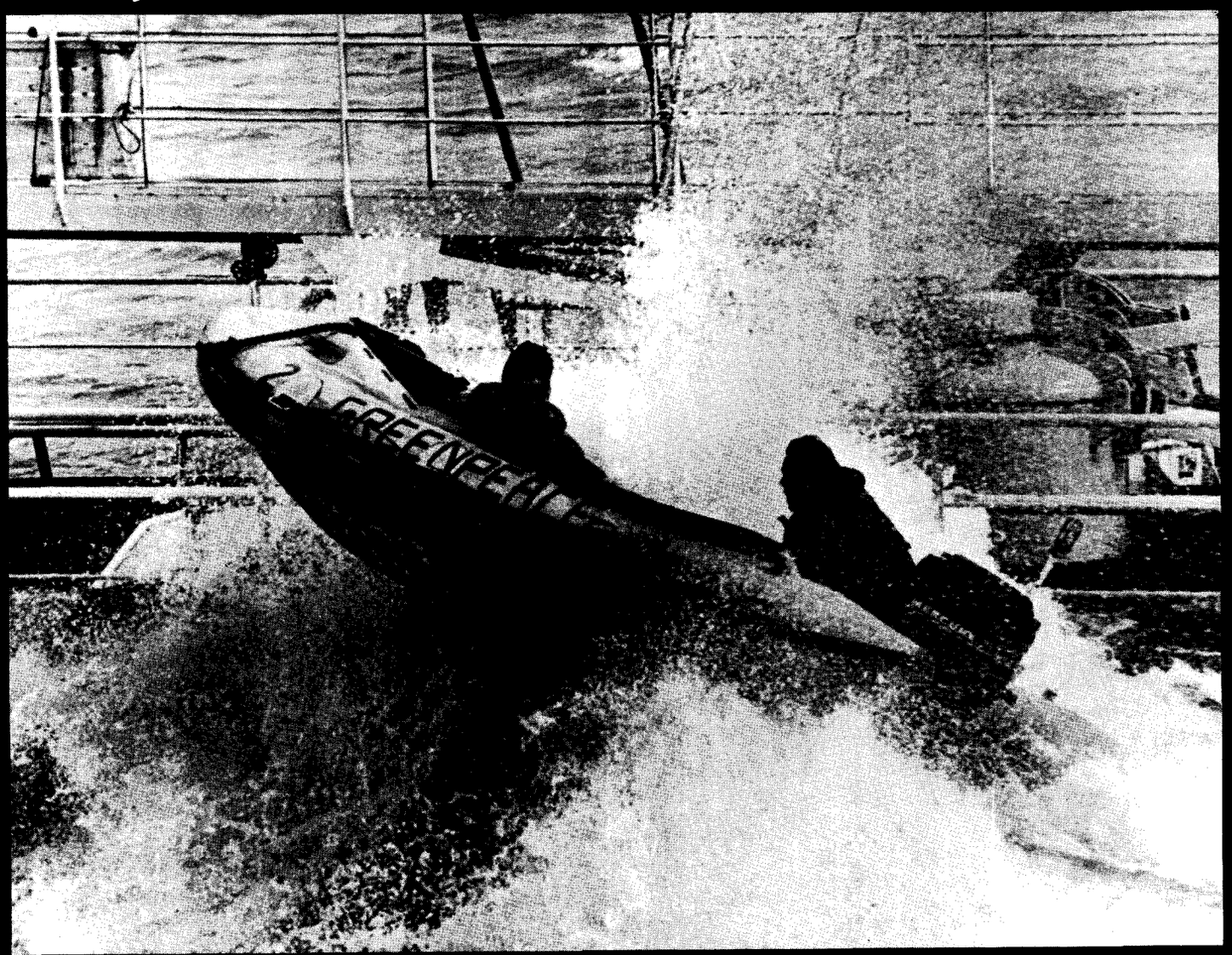

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